

REFUGEE WATCH

A South Asian Journal on Forced Migration

**Contemporary Wars and Politics of Dispossession:
Afghanistan and Ukraine**

60

Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group
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*Nergis Canefe &
Nasreen Chowdhury*

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Editors' Note

In this special issue of Refugee Watch focused on the forced migration crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine, we continue to debate the significance of forced migration studies within the larger context of history, politics and critical methodological interventions in the post-colonial context. This issue has been put together in order to facilitate a robust conversation amongst scholarship on the Afghan exodus defined in the long *durée* and not just the American invasion of the country, and, the recent Ukrainian refugee crisis in relation to the Russian invasion of the Ukrainian war. Both of these armed conflicts and situations of chronic insecurity continue to have accumulative consequences for those affected in their respective regions.

MCRG has long been a pivotal platform for the development and refinement of ideas on displacement, dispossession and mass migration in Asia. Inclusion of work on Ukraine thus provides a novel reading of the geographies and borderscapes of post-coloniality. For epistemological reasons, this is a most welcome step forward in its contribution to the larger debates on critiques of Western knowledge architectures.

We are indebted to Paula Banerjee and other staff members of the MCRG for their unerring support of this special issue. It would be remiss if we failed to acknowledge the many unforeseen challenges associated with making this publication available. Through no fault of our contributors, the target publication date was revised as the crisis in Ukraine assumes an unimagined scale. In hindsight, however, it appears that the timing proved most fortunate, as it allowed for the inclusion of two special roundtable discussions of critical value.

Special thanks to each contributor for responding to our call for papers, revising their work and timely submission of the final version. We invite you to celebrate the incredible diversity that characterises our audiences, contributors and the subjects of their scholarly work. The articles chosen to be included in this special issue include analyses of both primary and secondary sources, along with roundtable discussions and panels of experts to facilitate further reading and discussion. Taken together, this special issue has the potential to enhance our understanding of the complex relationships between the Afghan and Ukrainian refugee crisis, war, forced migration, post-coloniality and global politics of dispossession.

Nergis Canefe, *York University, Canada*
&
Nasreen Chowdhory, *University of Delhi, India*

Methodological Quandaries of Studying Post-Soviet Displacements: An Invitation to Consider ‘Global Postcoloniality’ in Forced Migration Studies

By

Nergis Canefe *

In a recent special issue of the *Journal of Peace Research*, seemingly disparate strands of the literature on forced migration were weaved together to provide a more comprehensive overview of the successive processes in the journeys undertaken by displaced populations.¹ Among the key questions explored by the contributing authors were the directions of refugee movements, the long-term response of displaced populations to political events in their countries of origin and the drivers of international responses to mass displacements. Such overviews of forced migration studies are not uncommon as the field proliferates across disciplines. However, a specific subset of key questions perpetuates the blind spots, from which forced migration studies have suffered, allowing ahistorical, narrowly focused and international law and policy-oriented analysis to be paraded as the main contributions of associated scholarship. I fear there is a real danger of repeating this kind of mistake if we endeavour to ask, ‘why have the responses been so different [by the Global North but in particular by the European Union] to Afghan and Ukrainian refugee crises?’ I think this is the wrong question, and in the following pages, I will briefly attempt to explain the reasons for my outright protestation.

First, there has never been an even reception of forced migration movements in the Global North. Racialised indexes used to determine the ‘deservability’ of protection, and refugee rights are not a new debate. This kind of critical debate has a history of 20 or so years in the field. Second, and equally important, forced migration takes place regionally. It is a multi-stage process that relies upon previous paths of mobility and labour market needs and receptive or trapping economies. Thus, one cannot even assume, let alone

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expect, that Afghan refugees escaping the cycle of violence in this last round of regime change would stand the same chance as Ukrainians, who have already been an integral part of the post-Soviet and European labour markets, especially for semi-skilled work since the early 2000s. Third, the geopolitics of European expansion already allowed for permeable borders between Ukraine, especially Central and Eastern Europe, way before the latest Russian intervention. In other words, to talk about Europe opening its borders is anachronistic and ill informed.² Similarly, the destinations for Afghans have been Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. These countries traditionally allowed displaced Afghan populations to venture in unless the numbers were alarmingly high, albeit through temporary arrangements. Afghans never travelled across Euro-Asia to get to European countries en masse. Instead, they spread across the region since the early days of the successive invasions of their homeland. Fourth, Afghanistan is composed of multiple ethnic conglomerations and is a de facto federal enterprise. There isn't a prototypical Afghan refugee, and each displaced group tends to choose a destination where their identity would be welcome or at least not become subject to an outright attack. Compared to currently displaced Ukrainians, who often speak one European language in addition to Ukrainian and Russian, and who are equivocally Caucasian and of Christian faith, Afghans harbour an alarming degree of 'unknowns' in terms of their linguistic, ethnic, cultural and even religious identity.

Last, Ukraine has a very high percentage of educated and young people among the displaced populations. They are prime candidates for job placements and resettlement in the European countries in which they arrived. This is partially due to the Soviet heritage of free and accessible public education in the country. On the other hand, Afghanistan has been a war zone for almost half a century, and those who can afford to escape to the Global North in terms of their education, networks and means are a handful as opposed to millions of rural Afghan people scattered in the region. When these five factors are combined, I believe we could start a new conversation with more accurate forms of questioning regarding the similarities and differences between the Ukrainian and Afghan refugee crises.

Furthermore, contrary to existing analyses on forced migration and war nexus, in this commentary, I will use the Afghan and Ukrainian cases of war-related displacement to argue that conflict alone is not the sole or the main factor affecting people's decisions to flee or stay. Apart from its direct physical impact, war and significantly prolonged warfare destroy economic infrastructure and expose people to various hardships to attain survival, let alone mobility. Furthermore, the flight option is often impeded by such factors as geographical barriers like rivers and mountain ranges, physical infrastructure such as armed borders or military presence and active war, and socio-economic conditions under which people are forced to live. In other words, escaping violence is never easy and often not even doable. Consequently, war or conflict-related forced migration movements cannot be discussed in isolation from the issues mentioned above characterising Afghan and Ukrainian crises in the larger context of global disposessions.³

The Burden of Post-Soviet History and the Problem of Alterity

In the post-Soviet context, forced migration includes not only refugee flows, asylum seekers, internal displacement and development or climate-induced displacement but also aggregate cases of de facto statelessness, deportations, child soldiers, labour camps and human trafficking. These additional factors have increased considerably in volume and political significance since the end of the Cold War in the region which was once the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. They have also become an integral part of the East-East and East-West (in this instance, West refers explicitly to the European Union) relationships with regard to issues concerning the reception of dispossessed populations.

Forced migration gives rise to fears of loss of state control, especially in the context of state security. In this context, it is essential to question earlier approaches to the forced migration and war nexus, which have been based on the principle of relatively autonomous societies as opposed to an understanding of war and its excesses as a historical, transnational and interdisciplinary undertaking. In other words, we need to attend to forced population movements in the post-Soviet landscape beyond the relatively narrow specifications of the regulative and strategic effects of displacement during the war. The prevailing focus leaves us with an impoverished understanding of dispossession and its operation in Afghanistan, Ukraine and beyond. Instead, I would propose that these movements be investigated through a deeper engagement with the historical development of the specific conflicts within the larger regional context and with due attention to the politics informing their orchestration and normalisation. This alternative approach would accomplish three things. First, it would correct the predominantly ahistorical approach to the Afghan and Ukrainian crises, revealing the complicated and contested construction of some of the core legal and political concepts pertaining to citizenship regimes in the post-Soviet domain. Second, the privileging of what I would call 'autonomous civilian suffering' requires analytical correction regarding the contextual character of dispossessions, deportations, expulsions and other de facto displacements. Third, it would provide new resources for analysing and understanding dispossession as an essential aspect of reordering politics rather than simply as collateral damage.

In the context of Afghanistan, the national-territorial delimitation of Central Asia remains at the heart of a debate about the nature of the post-Soviet rule. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the political geography of Central Asia has long been a site for denouncing Soviet nationality policy as a strategy for repressing national aspirations.⁴ For instance, the national aspirations of Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik societies, among others, were brought to the fore as a counter-discourse to Bolshevik claims of clans and tribes trying to posture as nations.⁵ The Soviet regime has also been framed for having suppressed legitimate

nationalist aspirations in Afghanistan. Thus, the end of communism came as a moment of 'postcolonial liberation'. This colonial/colonising narrative of Soviet nation-making also offers clues about the traditions of dispossession and displacement both during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras.

The Soviet Union promoted the development of national institutions and consciousness, which explicitly rejected the ideology of race. And yet, racial politics were present at many levels of Soviet nationalities policies, especially between 1937 and 1953. During Stalin's rule, select populations were marked with supposedly 'immutable traits', an argument that has been the key for the Stalinist purges of specific nationalities. Although Soviet population politics oscillated between sociological and biological categorisation of population groups, they never sought the physical extermination of entire groups, nor did they take an official position against multi-ethnicity or interracial marriages. In this context, oddly, the radicalisation of state violence in the post-Soviet era was accompanied by the endemically unstable national identities defended in terms of borderlands. Both Afghanistan and Ukraine constitute prime examples. Similar conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan in the former Soviet Union have not been resolved, except these resulted in expulsions rather than exodus. Self-declared separatist states emerged amidst the post-Soviet states, such as the Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic (PMR) inside Moldovan borders, the Republic of South Ossetia and the Republic of Abkhazia within Georgian borders, and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic of Azerbaijan; all of them weaving together sustain the current status quo of non-resolution of ethno-religious differences. The key difference between these instances of multiple fragmentations within post-Soviet borders and the Ukrainian and Afghan cases is that in the latter two instances, there has been direct military involvement and ensuing war and outright conflict leading to mass displacement.

The mass exodus from Ukraine in the context of the Russian invasion is fuelled by historical insecurities already resulting in multiple waves of migration.⁶ Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, nearly 5 million Ukrainian civilians have become refugees, primarily women and children, as men aged 18–60 are not permitted to leave the country.⁷ As the war continues, cities, hospitals and vital health infrastructure have been destroyed. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, WHO, UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund and local governments are all engaged and working on the ground to ensure humanitarian aid and a steady flow of supplies. The prediction is that if the war continues, 90 per cent of the Ukrainian population could face poverty and extreme economic vulnerability, leaving deep social and economic scars for generations to come.⁸ Combined with forced internal and external displacements by the Russian annexation of Crimea and conflicts in eastern provinces, the current Ukrainian conflict led to a steep rise in skilled and student migration as part of the asylum journeys. As Ukraine secured visa-free travel to the EU, the future of mass displacements in the region will be shaped by the vagaries of the geopolitical game between the EU and Russia, the new US administration and other

players such as China and Turkey. What is almost inevitable, regardless of the particular outcomes of the ongoing war, is that a shift of young, skilled, and semi-skilled Ukrainians into surrounding labour markets will continue and eventually they will be absorbed into the regional economies of the core and semi-periphery of the European Union.

On the other hand, if we look at the Afghan refugee crisis, Afghanistan-related internal displacement and refugee movements pose a challenge not just in the country but throughout the entire Near East and Central Asia region.⁹ Policies by regional and international actors toward Afghan refugees assumed a definite alarmist tenor in fear of the development of refugee warrior communities. Combined with geostrategic and economic interests, future refugee admissions or minimal assistance appears to be dismal. The European and North American reaction to Afghan refugees following the Taliban's violent takeover in May 2021 have been overwhelmingly selective, apprehensive and reticent, with statements of humanitarianism and solidarity made only in terms of saving 'select lives' in remarkably small numbers. This reaction contrasts with the reception of Ukrainian displaced populations, at least on the surface, despite significant similarities between these two displaced populations as they both escape from war and violence.¹⁰ At this point, I will again argue that these two waves of mass dispossession are not at all similar in several respects. Furthermore, the rejection and regional containment of Afghan refugees has very little to do with a 'unique symbolic threat' of them posing a challenge to the religion, values, belief systems, ideology or worldview of receiving societies. If so, that preamble applies to millions of displaced peoples in the Global South.

Post-Coloniality, Dispossession and Post-Soviet Landscapes

Since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, migration flows within the post-Soviet regional borders have received considerably less attention than their counterparts in Asia, Latin America and Africa, despite being significantly large in scale and at least consequential for the economics and politics of the whole of Euro-Asia. Likewise, debates about restrictive migration policies, eroding asylum rights and fortifications along the borderlands of Europe, Australia and North America have often omitted even summary mentions of dynamics of forced migration, exile, exodus and deportations within Euro-Asia. This is a direct result of the historical gaze of forced migration studies. The question is whether the Afghan and Ukrainian crises would change how a global map of dispossessions is constructed. The politics of mapping enables not only the faculty of graphic literacy, but also leads to an awareness of the power dynamics embedded in regional realities. Maps are not simple and formal projections of mathematical calculations. For instance, the North-on-top convention of world maps orients and provides directionality to how we understand the world. Forced migration studies lack virtues of cartographic agility and continue to paint the post-Soviet East as a vast expanse of unknowns. Mapping exercises in the field lead to the

inadequate specification of the scope of exploration of changes in the character of dispossessions and displacement at a global scale.¹¹

As we know all too well in the Middle East and East Asia context, colonially defined borders have long-lasting effects on contemporary population movements. Yet, disciplinary fragmentation has obscured the similarities between these regions and the post-Soviet East. In both instances, despite being closely related to the populations in countries of asylum in the immediate vicinity—through shared culture, identity and language—displaced populations are categorically classified as non-citizens, aliens and others.¹² I would argue this racialising logic produced within social relations and further calcified by the after effects of the empire is not unique to histories of European colonialism.¹³ Encounters of black and brown migrants with white immigration bureaucracies that regulate and monitor their absorption and circulation in the Global North are not the only story to be told.¹⁴ State institutions and migration policies in the post-Soviet spaces of dispossession are anything but free from discrimination, racialisation and systemic exclusion. That is an essential part of the westward movement of displaced Ukrainians and primarily Southern movement of displaced Afghans. As Tayyab Mahmud contended in the 1990s, living as a migrant “is to live with desires and anxieties of the state and the nation. It is also to live with the heritage and genealogies of empire and imperialism”.¹⁵ The colonial modes of managing and disciplining non-citizens are best achieved through creating hierarchical categories of mobility.¹⁶ Even the temporary periods of ‘open door policies’ toward refugees, exiles and migrants, as we are currently witnessing in the case of Ukrainians, are marked by a continuing preoccupation with categories of race, ethnicity, religious identity and other calculations about politics of belonging. The notable surge in popular and, at times, government-led anti-refugee rhetoric across EU member states, particularly amongst the Central and Eastern European republics, has readily adopted a racialised and colonial language positioning refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants as those who should be held responsible for degradation and overstretching of local infrastructure, social services and public resources, fostering political instability. This is regardless of histories of differentiation between more or less desirable migrant bodies such as Ukrainians versus Syrians or Afghans.

Returning to mapping practices, just as power is captured in and communicated through maps to assert command and control of territory and socio-spatial relations, mapping practices can also be conducive to resisting and contesting the exercise of power over space. What I call the mapping praxis must seek to destabilise maps and produce alternative maps that allow for new forms of collaborative and counter-mapping. If so, mapping forced migration geographies in a way that marks post-Soviet immigration regimes from Ukraine to Afghanistan in stark contrast with continental demarcations readily employed in discussing these two cases. Furthermore, post-Soviet migration regimes, producing millions of displaced populations on account of differential determination of human worth, treat populations on the move as potentially profitable subjects of regional economies. In other words, most of the displaced people in the post-Soviet East are neither destined for the

Global North, nor do they head for the Global South. Coping with bodies that arrive as irregular, illegitimate or crisis-ridden, this most recent proliferation of displaced populations in the post-Soviet context is, in fact, part of a much longer history of differential migration governance in the region. The current period may seem distinct as population movements are no longer geographically restricted through the central Soviet state's delineations of internal borders, territories, or corridors of deportations and resettlements. This new ordering of civilian populations in Ukraine and Afghanistan also has the unique character of the subjects of dispossession being denied their right to have multiple identities. The administrative bifurcation of both Ukrainian and Afghan states led to the authorisation or denial of mobilities as colonial biopolitics dictated which non-white bodies could move at the behest of global capital. Post-Soviet state authorities had a similar desire concerning who should go and who should stay or eventually return.

While Afghan refugees and displaced people seeking asylum are monitored, excluded, selectively admitted and securitised as racialised subjects, migration regimes affecting displaced Ukrainians also combine ethno-territorial notions of citizenship, national security concerns and colonial dispositions of race, territory and graduated mobility. Contemporary refugee regimes emerged from overlapping legacies of colonial laws and global regulatory frameworks in the form of international, regional and national legislations closely managing the belonging, bodies and (im)mobilities of peoples on the move. While the regional and ultimately international authorities sought to control Afghan migrations through a mixture of forceful containment, incentivisation and deterrence, Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers posed a different kind of challenge for governmental regulations: how to calculate the benefits of receiving the young, resourceful and educated masses of a post-Soviet society according to the principle of maximum return.

Asylum After Empire? Afghan Exodus in Context

The final and complete withdrawal of Soviet combatant forces from Afghanistan in February 1989 was followed by direct and intensive involvement by superpowers in the Afghan conflict for another three decades. The events that unfolded in the aftermath of the military stalemate of the past year have been a clear indication that the Afghan polity is likely to continue to be under the shadow of severe forms of political instability. Afghanistan currently suffers from crises of national identity, political legitimacy and an unresolved tally of war crimes simultaneously. With the gradual weakening of the Afghan state, which is a direct consequence of years of occupation-related warfare, managing the current crisis has proven extremely difficult. The bonds of belonging and togetherness that transcends the feeling of membership in a class, clan, religious sect, region or locality have been close to non-existence due to a discrepancy between the reach of the state and the sense of political community. As segments of the Afghan society show greater allegiance to subnational groupings, the multi-ethnic nature of contemporary Afghanistan

combined with class and ideological divisions within the polity proves to be the breathing grounds for mass displacement.

Before the outbreak of revolutionary violence in 1978, the population of Afghanistan was estimated at around 17 million. It included the major ethnic groups of the Pashtuns, the Tajiks, the Uzbeks, the Turkmans, the Hazaras, the Baluchs and the Nooristanis in addition to numerous smaller communities. The Pashtuns historically accounted for 50-55 per cent majority of the population. Among the minorities, the Tajiks are the most numerous, at about 30 per cent of the population.¹⁷ Afghanistan emerged as a Pashtun state in the mid-eighteenth century, with other ethnic groups primarily incorporated into the state through conquests. The Pashtun character of the state was altered with the Durand Treaty, signed between Afghanistan and British India in 1893, dividing the Pashtun population of Afghanistan into two. The Sunni non-Pashtun minorities are organised in the *Jamaati-Islami*, which has close ties with Pakistan and Arab states in the Middle East. The Shi'ite minorities, on the other hand, are organised into Iran-based groups with access to foreign military and financial support. As a result, the centralisation of authority in Afghanistan has been conventionally counterbalanced by disintegrating tendencies.

During the Soviet War in Afghanistan (1979–1989), Afghan statehood gradually dissolved with no international law enforcement and quickly turned into a space of both random and organised violence under the shadow of the brutality of the atrocities committed by both sides. With the involvement of regional powers of Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, as well as the Soviet regime followed by the United States and the NATO forces, the problems of the Afghan polity were not limited to rebuilding state institutions and establishing a sense of political community in the country, but included the pushing back of various occupying forces. Currently, the UNHCR identifies the Afghan refugee crisis as the fourth largest in the world. More than 6 million Afghans were forcibly displaced from their homes by the end of 2021. The 3.5 million displaced within Afghanistan are still on the move, while 2.6 million are hosted as refugees in the region.¹⁸ The majority of the refugees from Afghanistan live in Pakistan and Iran, which continue to host more than 1.3 million and 780,000 registered Afghan refugees, respectively. The numbers are expected to be much higher, with clandestine and non-status Afghans residing in these two countries alone. Thus, the question of why Europe does not open its doors to Afghan refugees but does so for the Ukrainians is already answered. Afghan refugees, many of whom belong to ethnic minorities disowned by their state and primarily of rural background, move on foot and follow the pathways of previous migrations of their ethno-religious kin. In many instances, there are third-generation children born to Afghan refugee families. Recurrent natural disasters, including droughts and earthquakes, deepening poverty and lack of public services, including access to basic education, continue to create multiple forms of dispossession both within and at the country's borders. I would go as far as to suggest that Afghanistan is the new Africa for the global regime of displacement.

If so, who does the Global North accept as refugees from Afghanistan? Many resettled in the United States are Afghan nationals who served as translators or interpreters during the US mission in Afghanistan. Due to their employment with the US government, these Afghans faced serious threats to their safety following the Taliban takeover of Kabul in 2021. They have thus been brought to the US and resettled with their families. However, of the many millions on the move, their numbers are in mere thousands. As far as the EU is concerned, back in December 2021, the group of 15 EU member states agreed to resettle 40,000 Afghans, with Germany accepting the bulk of new arrivals as usual.¹⁹ In addition, at least 85,000 Afghans have fled their homeland to countries near the EU, including Turkey. Belgium, in this regard, is notable, who promised 'places' for 425 Afghans in total.

The historiography on the subject of the movement of metropolitan people to the colonial lands and colonised peoples moving within the empire and eventually to the metropole during and after the empire is rich.²⁰ In the meantime, many people migrated outside the formal imperial space both before and after forms of subjugation and occupation. Formation of these semi-autonomous spaces of migration, autonomous from the metropole and broader than the political space marked by imperial borders is essential for understanding the Afghan exodus. The Soviets and the American empire created spaces that became quasi-sanctuaries for sub-groups of the Afghan population and marked their existence and survival as their own state disintegrated. In each instance, however, the destination has never been Europe.

'Gone with the Wind,' or, How Fast Does a Crisis Disappear from Public Conscience?

The forced displacement of millions in the wake of the 2003 US coalition invasion of Iraq was recorded as the largest in the Middle East since the 1948 Palestinian displacement at the inception of the State of Israel, until, of course, the emergence of the Syrian refugee crisis. It has had dire effects on Iraq and the region at large, with millions of displaced people resulting from and contributing to continual sectarian violence within Iraq. Iraq's neighbours Syria and Jordan hosted the vast majority of these refugees, followed by Turkey, Egypt and Lebanon. However, the fate of Iraqi refugees was soon forgotten with the onset of the Syrian refugee crisis and the discussion on the consequences of the forced displacement of millions of Syrians in the Middle East, Europe and beyond. It is only a matter of time before the Afghan crisis is normalised merely as a regional excess and the Ukrainian crisis is absorbed as part of the EU expansion policies.

This commentary has thus far been concerned with global politics of displacement and dispossession with specific reference to Afghan and Ukrainian refugee crises in the post-Soviet context. I argued that during prolonged neo-imperial conflicts, the meaning and boundaries of belonging

have become increasingly fluid. The post-Soviet geographies of nationhood have already been marked by multiple mass population movements before the latest crises in Ukraine. I also posited that in terms of critical methodologies, thinking about the world in a simplified binary of the Global North and the Global South creates a vacuum about the distinct characteristics of the migratory experiences of post-Soviet societies. Furthermore, applying the postcolonial lens to the imperial re-positioning of post-Soviet Russia and neo-imperialist expansions of the USA requires epistemic innovations rather than presumptions about the homogeneity of postcolonial states of existence, resistance and survival. As I tried to showcase here, regional power relations challenge the almost exclusive focus of forced migration and refugee research on the Global South versus the North dynamic or even the South-South migration paradigm.

While little attention has been paid to displacements in Central Asia, exclusive policies bordering on systemic racism towards Central Asian Migrants in Russia, conflicts in Tajikistan, refugee movements in Kazakhstan, Afghan arrivals in Uzbekistan, Iran and Pakistan, internally displaced peoples in Ukraine since 2014, the recent arrival of Belarusian and Russian dissidents in Ukraine and Poland, refugees and displaced peoples who became *de facto* stateless as a result of wars in Chechnya, Georgia and Moldova, and displacement due to the 2021 war between Azerbaijan and Armenia are among the long list of dispossession that marks the post-Soviet geographies. Indeed, the Russian invasion of Ukraine revealed how little is known about these waves of displacement and dispossession. Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas had been the epicentre of political and military conflict between Ukrainian armed forces and Russian-backed separatist forces since the spring of 2014. This confrontation alone has resulted in the forced displacement of 1.7million people.²¹ As the proclamation of two new states—Donetsk and Luhansk 'People's Republics'—*de facto* changed Ukraine's borders, the IDPs from Donbas had to navigate between constituting themselves as rightful and deserving citizens of Ukraine while also balancing their Donbas origins.

In response to mass displacement, justice is not about its dispensation. It is about the form justice would take, be it retributive, restorative, commutative, substantive, etc. The rhetoric surrounding resettlement programmes is an example in this regard. Resettlement of Ukrainian or Afghan refugees is never enough, and it is not a solution in and of itself. The myriad decisions it involves are an expansion of micromanagement practices to ever-higher scales of displacement, with pronounced disregard for the roots of the current economic, political and social turbulence across post-Soviet landscapes.

Furthermore, in forced migration studies, with few exceptions, the defining logic of contemporary capitalism is far from being challenged. On the contrary, they are being intensified and entrenched in the language of governance and regulation of migratory flows. The attitude of the Global North towards mass forms of displacement and dispossession in several countries in the post-Soviet space, including Tajikistan, Ukraine and Georgia,

shows clear elements of endorsement and apathy concerning the reanimation of imperial designs in the region. As the former Soviet Union disintegrated into 15 or more countries, most post-Soviet societies suffered from social, economic and financial crises. This alone created ripe conditions for fluid borders in that unique space, which is easily overlooked in the study of the Ukrainian refugee flows. Just as there were regional pathways established for communities to escape violence during the multiple stages of the Afghan conflict, so were pathways established for Ukrainians to become temporary workers, contractual labourers and semi-skilled cyclical migrants since the early 1990s in Eastern and Central Europe, as well as in the Russian Federation which succeeded the USSR after its collapse.

Overall, the Russian military interventions in Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014 and since February 2021) and Syria (2011 and more directly since 2015), as well as its involvement in Chechnya and Tajikistan and its continued support for separatism, regime change and authoritarianism in the post-Soviet landscape have been treated in a simplistic and analytically unproductive fashion, if attention has been paid at all. On the other hand, experiences of forced migration following the interventions by the American and NATO forces, the primary example being Afghanistan, in the post-Soviet space, have been regarded as geopolitical and security-related collateral damage. Either way, they have only been attended to from the Eurocentric lens of refugee law and migration governance.²² As an alternative, this commentary is written in part as a preamble to this special issue of the *Refugee Watch* to facilitate and expand collaboration and innovative thinking by bringing together critical approaches to Afghan and Ukrainian refugee crises under the aegis of postcolonial conditionalities of forced migration studies and with specific reference to post-Soviet geographies of displacement. Part of the present historical task is to reveal and trace the textured histories of imperial and neo-imperial legacies in the post-Soviet spaces of identity, belonging and survival. It is high time that we begin to envisage a 'global postcolonial' condition and systematically expand our understanding of postcolonial spaces of migration and dispossession.²³

Notes

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Janus Faced Migration Policymaking: A Case Study of Afghan-European Migration Policy

By

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In 2019, the Afghan government launched a comprehensive national migration policy. In spite of the significance of migration in Afghan cultural, economic, political and social life—the impulse for this policy came, not from the Afghan government or civil society, but from Europe, specifically from the member states of the European Union such as Germany, who received many of the 250,000 Afghans who applied for asylum in Europe in 2015, at the time of a crisis in the European asylum policy. Perhaps inevitably, the goals of Afghan migration policy were being set by European governments responding to domestic pressures and operating within particular ‘policy frames’. This article explores the role played by the European Union and its member states in shaping the migration policy of the Afghan government, in particular since 2014, and the return to power of the Taliban in 2021. This timeframe covers the creation of the National Unity Government (NUG), the withdrawal of international forces, a deterioration in the security and economic status of Afghanistan, a sharp rise in the number of people leaving the country, the so-called European Refugee Crisis, in which Afghans were the second largest group after Syrians, as well as the Brussels Conference and the implementation of the Joint Way Forward (JWF)—an agreement that tied the delivery of further aid to cooperation in matters of migration. Though it ends with the evacuation of Afghan allies in 2021, some comparisons are drawn with the response to refugees from Ukraine, which highlight the colonial and racist treatment of non-European refugees.

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This essay is structured around a series of questions that relate to migration policymaking in general, but more specifically to migration policy by, for and about Afghans. The examination of these questions indicates some of the problems with migration policymaking, especially when conducted at the supra-national level. The focus here is on state policies, European migration policies as they affect Afghans and the Afghan government and Afghan migration policies that have emerged in response to pressure exerted by Europe and Afghanistan's neighbouring states, Iran and Pakistan. Migration policy serves to highlight the international character of states,¹ since it is never simply national, and though driven by domestic pressures, always involves other states. The approach taken here is one of critical enquiry, in which the dominant framing of policy issues and its consequences are interrogated and questions of power and inequality are raised.² The findings are based on an 'interpretive' analysis of official documents and interviews with Afghan and European officials in Kabul. As a result, the conclusions offered and the meanings attributed to actions and policy are authors', based on 'plausibility and the balance of probability'³ and as such, open to argument and dispute.

Failing Migration Policies

In 2004, the migration scholar Stephen Castles asked, "Why migration policies fail".⁴ At that time, migration policies were largely developed and implemented in receiving countries, so Castles' paper concentrated on the migration policies of developed countries trying to control migration into their territories, focusing on the collective policies of the EC/EU. His answer to the question was that policies fail because of the complexity of factors shaping both international migration and policy. In particular, policies fail because they do not take account of 'migrant agency' and the 'structural factors', including 'political systems', that drive migration.

Castles stressed the importance of agency as migrants develop and implement their migration plans. Under the heading of agency, he discussed the factors that ease the move to and settlement in destinations, including migration networks that offer advice and resources, the migration industry (travel agents, labour recruiters, lawyers, etc.) and family strategies to manage risk at home by sending members abroad. Monsutti⁵ and Harpviken⁶ have discussed migration as a long-standing survival strategy for migrants, and described the networks that link Afghans in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and countries outside the region. These networks, while sometimes constraining migration (persuading or enabling people to stay in Afghanistan), also provide information and resources to those wishing to leave and they are trusted much more than information provided by official campaigns and channels, especially those that seek to dissuade people from leaving.

Castles makes an important observation about the way in which (potential) migrants view migration policies—as "just another barrier to be overcome to survive.... Policies become opportunities structures to be compared and overcome".⁷ In other words, migrant behaviour may be shaped

by the categories, objectives and regulations constructed by states, but not in the simple, causal manner frequently assumed by policymakers. Afghans seek out information on policies in different potential destinations, but that information is tempered by the experience of the contacts, who have negotiated those policies.⁸ Contacts may, for example, urge potential migrants not to try the Turkey-Greece route, instead go directly to Italy, or to avoid having their fingerprints taken.

Castles notes the importance of structural factors in shaping migration, including the 'root causes' that drive emigration (conflict, poverty); the dependence of sending states on migration to reduce unemployment, improve the balance of payment and encourage development; and the structural dependence of developed countries on migrant labour. Migration contributes to the globalisation and transnationalism that in turn drives migration. This makes it difficult for individual states to develop and implement policy independently of other states. For sending states, a dependence on migration makes it difficult for them to regulate emigration or protect their citizens abroad. European policies recognise the drivers of migration from Afghanistan, which despite regime changes continues to suffer from massive insecurity, natural disasters including drought, earthquakes and floods, and chronic poverty, but does not respond to alleviate them or to create safe, legal migration routes. Instead, the policy objectives and strategies continue to focus on controlling, managing and reducing migration.⁹

Revisiting his paper in 2017, Castles summarised the arguments of the earlier paper as "Migration policies are problematic—because they are about migration" instead of inequality. He notes that the "economic and political policies that perpetuate inequality are much more important in shaping migration than are migration policies—but much harder to challenge".¹⁰ This applies to the Afghan situation: as long as there is a significant gap between Afghanistan and destination countries in terms of levels of security and economic and political stability, Afghans will be forced to migrate. In a commentary on Castles' paper, Anderson¹¹ stresses the importance of acknowledging how two historical processes continue to drive migration, especially forced migration: "European colonialism and the emergence of the neoliberal global economic order". These two processes are at the root of the global inequality caused by centuries of "domination and plunder",¹² which led to the concentration of wealth in the Global North and a severely retarded economic and political development in the Global South. The neoliberal system, which turns migrants into an international reserve army of labour, vulnerable and exploitable, sucks migrants from the periphery to the developed centre. Afghanistan's fragility is at least as much a product of colonial ambition and exploitation as the failings of the indigenous political elite, and migration policies developed for (rather than by) Afghans continue the process of colonialism.

Making (Migration) Policy

Scholars have developed different models to describe the policymaking process and libraries have been written evaluating and refining these models¹³ and then applying them to migration policymaking.¹⁴ Rather than using Afghan migration policy as a case study to test these different models, in this article, three (of many) models are instead used as different lenses to bring into focus the problematic aspects of policymaking in this area. Broadly speaking, the different models may be summarised as the rational decision-making process; the political game; the discourse-institutional approach. Evidence-based policymaking (EBP) is the most recent version, which assumes that policymakers are rational actors who collect evidence and information on the ‘problem’ and on the options for addressing the problem and select the best/most feasible/most likely to achieve a particular goal. This model assumes that there is a problem that requires a solution, and that it is the job of policymakers to identify the problem and using the best available evidence, devise a solution to resolve it.¹⁵ It also assumes that more/better evidence will lead to better solutions, i.e., that rational actors will learn from past mistakes.¹⁶

It is this model that drives the many academic, government and NGO studies into migration, and its causes and consequences: the belief that if policymakers simply had more, better evidence, they would produce fairer, more efficient migration policies—a triumph of hope over experience. On this account, at least from the perspective of the Global North, migration is a problem of control and policymakers are obliged to find ways to better manage the movement of people so that the movement of certain categories of people are facilitated, while others are blocked. Castles’ summary of migration policies in the post-war period describes the multiple failures of the “rational solutions” offered by policymakers.¹⁷ However, migration was not a significant problem for Afghan governments, largely because migration out of Afghanistan brought benefits to those who migrated and to their families (though there were also costs),¹⁸ as well as to reducing pressure on the government; because migration into Afghanistan was not significant; and because the ‘state’ was much smaller. It provided very little for its citizens/subjects so there was not so much competition from outsiders for resources. Migration was not a problem, but an important survival strategy for families and governments coping with poverty and unemployment, and then conflict and civil war.¹⁹

Providing a large, cheap workforce with limited rights, Afghan migration was also a solution for neighbouring countries such as Iran and Pakistan, especially following the expansion of the oil industry in Iran, which created labour demand in mining and construction.²⁰ This solution became a problem for Afghan migrants when they were denied access to education and employment, when they suffered abuse, arbitrary detention, deportation and discrimination. Migration only became a problem for successive Afghan governments when Afghan refugees were armed in refugee camps and sent back to Afghanistan to fight during the 1980s and 1990s, or when they were

used as bargaining tools, with Iran and Pakistan threatening, and sometimes actually, forcing thousands of Afghans back across the border,²¹ a practice that continues even today. Early refinements of this theory introduced the concept of ‘bounded rationality’, which acknowledges that policy is made by actors with limited information-processing capacity, time and resources and under several other constraints.²² This describes very well the challenges facing any Afghan government desirous of developing any policy, including migration policy. Despite many years of intervention by the international community, and millions of dollars spent on capacity building, neither the Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation, nor the other line ministries had the necessary skills or expertise²³ to develop a migration policy. Much of the data already existing is not available in the national languages, and few officials were sufficiently at ease with the jargon, never mind the concepts and theories, to be able to read, analyse and respond to the concept notes, reports and recommendations provided in English (in spite of requests that they be provided in at least one of the national languages), within the short timeframe allowed.

This ‘bounded rationality’ was even more evident in European policymaking. Castles’ article details the problems with the European approach throughout the 1990s, which focused on controls while speaking of root causes. Even after two decades and with libraries of evidence (disregarded by policymakers), migration policies still suffer from the same flaws and failures. During the years the authors spent working with the Ministry in Kabul, different foreign experts with no experience of Afghanistan were tasked with drafting a Comprehensive Migration Policy. In a document laying out the position of the EU with respect to migration from Afghanistan, the authors emphasise the need “to address irregular migration, in particular through effective return and readmission of Afghan citizens irregularly staying in the EU”.²⁴ Although the document begins by referring to the high number of asylum seekers from Afghanistan, nowhere does it acknowledge that the only way for refugees to reach Europe is by irregular migration and with the assistance of the smugglers that it wishes to combat.²⁵ The document, like many others generated by the EU bureaucracy, refers to return and readmission as necessary to discourage irregular migration, although there is no evidence that it does so, and significant evidence that it has no such impact.²⁶ With regard to the policy narrative below, note that rationality here is clearly limited by a stubborn adherence to particular policy narratives regardless of their incoherence and counterfactual evidence.

A Political Game

Another useful lens is to see policymaking as a political game. This model sees policy as the outcome of compromises between different stakeholders who may have competing goals and diverging interests, or at least different views on how the same goal may be achieved. The process by which policies are made is a bargaining game, in which power is the key, and “the institutional context [is a] pluri-centric, elitist, interorganisational arena with restricted

access”.²⁷ The different stakeholders may be within a government engaged in ‘bureaucratic politics’ over budgets, careers and competencies, or between Ministries, or vested interests, such as government departments, international and national agencies, community groups, migrant rights groups and private companies. And, when it comes to a policy area that involves more than one state, as in the case of migration, the number of stakeholders multiplies, and issues of power are the key.²⁸ Policymakers are obliged to (appear to) satisfy competing interests. Castles refers to a strategy frequently employed by policymakers of employing anti-immigrant rhetoric to satisfy an electorate concerned about competition or threats to national identity while pursuing policies that encourage migration to satisfy economic or labour market objectives.²⁹ In other words, policies frequently have hidden as well as explicit agendas, agendas that may be in conflict.

The EU policy agendas in relation to migration from Afghanistan are explicit: stop irregular migration and facilitate returns. However, there were tensions between the European Union Commission (EU Commission) and the European Parliament, between the Directorates General (DG) of Home Affairs and that of International Co-operation and Development (DEVCO), and between the Afghan government and the Afghan Parliament, as well as between the Afghan President and some Ministries. Policies usually require resources and are a tool in the competition for scarce resources. In policymaking as a game, the stakes are budgets. Ministers compete to increase their budgets; ambitious policies require bigger budgets which increase the prestige of the Minister/Department. Policymakers may re-frame an issue as one that comes within their competence and requires an increase in funding. For example, the Joint Way Forward (JWF) was a clear example of the DG Home Affairs staking a claim to DG Development resources by insisting a) that development aid was contingent on signing the JWF and that b) the money for implementing the reintegration programmes for those who have returned comes from the development budget. There was a pushback from the DG Development representatives who objected to the use of development funds to pressurise the Afghan government, in particular, since it flew in the face of findings from DEVCO’s study.³⁰

The EU Commission had fashioned the JWF as an agreement in order to bypass the scrutiny of the European Parliament, in which representatives of some of the different stakeholders sit. The JWF was negotiated and agreed between Afghan government officials and a team of EU negotiators led by Melbin, the EU Ambassador in Kabul, without any debate in the European Parliament, thus avoiding objections from, for example, the Green, Liberal and Left parties; between those, such as DG Home Affairs, for whom the immediate policy goal was reversing the flow of migrants from Afghanistan, and those, such as DG Development, for whom the goal should be resolving the conflict and economic challenges that caused people to flee. Part of the policy game includes attempts to limit the number of stakeholders who can influence policy, partly because it will just make the process more streamlined, and this is justified by arguing that ‘help will get to the needier quicker’, but it is also a way to avoid challenges and scrutiny. The

European Parliament clearly saw the JWF as an example of the latter. In a 2017 resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, the European Parliament noted:

... the conclusion of the Joint Way Forward informal readmission agreement between the EU and Afghanistan; regrets the lack of parliamentary oversight and democratic control on the conclusion of this agreement; ... underlines that EU assistance and cooperation must be tailored to achieving development and growth in third countries and to reducing and eventually eradicating poverty, and not to incentivising third countries to cooperate on readmission of irregular migrants, to forcibly deterring people from moving, or to stopping flows to Europe.³¹

Apart from the tensions in Europe, the EU Commission also noted differences within the Afghan government:

While President Ghani and parts of the Afghan government are publicly committed to cooperate on readmission, other members of the government do not appear to facilitate the return of irregular migrants, while attempting to renegotiate conditions to restrict the acceptance of returnees.³²

These divisions were evident in the final months of negotiations as the different Afghan political actors made their positions clear in the media and in Parliament. It seems that during the negotiations, the EU players were more successful in hiding their divisions. However, during a policy briefing,³³ Minister Balkhi argued that the divisions within the Afghan government were superficial, that, in fact, he and the president held similar positions, and that ultimately they had won because they received the aid, but knew the EU would never be able to deport 80,000 per year as they had hoped. This raises the question of the extent to which the arguments in Kabul around the JWF were just a pantomime to deflect from more serious issues.³⁴

While the outcome of the negotiations may be interpreted differently by the various players, they clearly revealed asymmetrical power relations. The Afghan government, dependent for much of its budget on foreign aid, had a great deal to lose, and was in a very vulnerable position. While Melbin, the senior EU official in Kabul made no attempt to hide this disparity, seemed in fact to revel in it, and in the access it afforded him to the president,³⁵ other officials saw their role as that of a mediator,³⁶ trying to negotiate the best brokerage deal for both parties. One official explained that it was necessary to persuade the Afghan officials to compromise, to accept an increase in returns and to cooperate in reducing irregular migration, in order to maximise the pledges from individual donors.³⁷ If we see policymaking as gaming, then the building of policy coalitions is a very important way of redressing those asymmetrical power relations.³⁸ This was one area where Afghan officials failed. Had they developed policy coalitions with partners in Europe, whether with DG DEVCO officials, more progressive political coalitions in the Parliament or migrant organisations, they may have found it easier to push back against the demands of Melbin, Cameron, May and the German Interior

Minister de Maizière, among others. Alternatively, they could have strengthened their hand by using EU principles and legislation to undermine the JWF proposals, but a lack of familiarity with the details of EU asylum legislation further handicapped them. Nonetheless, as Minister Balkhi claimed, Afghanistan possibly won that particular policy game because of European failings rather than Afghan strengths. And those failings relate to the construction of the policy problem, which is a product of the policy discourse.

A Discourse-Institutionalist Approach

This approach, in contrast to the first discussed earlier, does not accept that there is an *a priori* objective problem to be identified and resolved. Instead, relying on a constructivist or interpretivist approach, those who adopt this approach explore the ways in which policymakers constitute, construct or represent problems through the employment of particular discourses. In this account of policymaking, policy is seen as, at best, the outcome of process of sharing divergent ways of framing the policy problem, and persuading others of the validity of one's argument (close to the rational process above) or at worse, the closing down and excluding of alternative frames so that one frame, one paradigm comes to dominate.³⁹ Discourses are not just ways of talking about or framing an issue but they are also "the interactive processes by and through which ideas are generated and communicated"⁴⁰ and blocked. Ideas, discourses or frames are institutionalised in laws and practices, shaping the governance of that issue. For example, migration can be framed as a security, social or political problem, as a technical or management problem or as a development opportunity, a win-win-win strategy for migrants, sending and receiving governments.⁴¹ For some scholars, ideas are tools that are deployed to advance particular policy preferences, while for others, "ideas are conceived as paradigms or frames, delimiting what is feasible or legitimate".⁴² For example, the idea that states have the right to control entry into their territory is a dominant policy frame within which policies must be constructed. While the idea of open borders may be floated, it is usually dismissed as unfeasible, except within carefully limited areas such as the EU, and for a limited category of people.

These frames or discourses are shaped by the belief systems or ideologies of different actors or groups of actors, who are often resistant to persuasion and are "used for strategic purposes, but need not be internally coherent or strictly rational".⁴³ Within the different institutions of the EU, different discourses are in conflict and compete, and these tensions are evident in relation to Afghan migration, which is regularly cited as a concern for European states. Most documents issuing from the EU recognise the factors driving migration from Afghanistan as conflict and poverty, and some refer to the potential benefits of migration. For example, shortly after the second round of Presidential elections in 2014 in Afghanistan, the Council of the EU published a series of conclusions, in which the primary concern of EU member states is:

the need to create jobs for some 400,000 Afghans entering the workforce each year. If this demand is not met, there is a risk of a new generation of underemployed and alienated youth which may lead to an increased pool for insurgent recruitment and uncontrolled and illegal immigration to neighbouring countries and Europe. Well managed legal migration can bring benefits, while further increases of uncontrolled and illegal immigration would exacerbate pressure on a number of EU Member States.⁴⁴

The European Agenda on Migration⁴⁵ declared: “Europe should continue to be a safe haven for those fleeing persecution as well as an attractive destination for the talent and entrepreneurship of students, researchers and workers.”

And yet, despite references to the benefits of migration and calls for legal migration channels, none have been created.⁴⁶ Instead, almost every conclusion/resolution/statement on Afghanistan issuing from the EU, whether referring to development, economy, elections, justice or peace refers to the need to ‘tackle illegal migration’, ‘combat irregular migration’, ‘combat migration smuggling’. The framing of the problem in 2015 as Afghans joined Syrians on the Balkan route was not new—since the 1990s, European governments have defined migration as a technical problem—how to steer and select “migrants who can contribute most to productivity and economic growth”,⁴⁷ while excluding those who might be a drain on public resources. Asylum seekers represent a particular challenge for these governments as, legally, states may not select from among applicants and there is no limit to the number of refugees that should be accepted.⁴⁸ In 2015, it seems the ‘problem’ was not the wars and conflicts that were driving millions from their homes, it was too many refugees arriving too fast into countries that were still feeling the effects of the 2008 financial and economic crises and that were vulnerable to populist, racist movements.⁴⁹

The solution chosen was not, however, ending war and conflict or ceasing the sale of arms to those who make war, it was not finding a way to help refugees reconstruct their lives in safety and dignity and contribute to host societies—it was, as EU President Jean-Claude Juncker told the European Parliament, “to ensure that no more refugees come from Turkey into the European Union”⁵⁰ and in the case of Afghans, to send back as many as possible—“up to 80,000 persons could potentially need to be returned in the near future”.⁵¹ The Turkish route was not the only target of this policy, North African countries, including Libya, and Sahel countries such as Niger, Mali and Senegal were also paid to block the routes to Europe and take back those who had transited their territory.⁵² The dominant discourse within the EU Commission and the Council of the EU employs a discourse of ‘safety’ and ‘dignity’, but essentially problematises migration from Afghanistan (and elsewhere) without acknowledging that the ‘illegality’ that marks much Afghan migration is produced by the lack of legal channels for asylum or labour migration.

This discourse was exported very effectively to Afghanistan in 2016 and was clearly visible around the Joint Way Forward negotiations.

Government ministers explained to the Afghan Parliament and to the media the problems Afghan migration was creating for Europe. Although within the negotiations, officials fought hard to soften the conditions being imposed, they offered no challenge to this problematising discourse. It was accepted that Europe was threatened by a populist movement capitalising on the arrival of migrants, that, as argued by German officials, more Afghans in Europe would mean less money available for Afghanistan. The idea that Afghan migrants could make an economic contribution to both Afghanistan and Europe seemed unthinkable—literally. Afghan officials were distracted by unnecessary (because already enshrined in EU asylum law) arguments around obligations to consider claims individually and refrain from deportation before all appeals had been exhausted, rather than attacking the inadequate implementation of those laws or the lack of access to rights.

Unfortunately, lack of capacity within the Afghan government means that challenges to the framing of Afghan migration as a problem for Afghanistan and transit and receiving countries is unlikely, though a re-framing is necessary if the government is to develop a policy that is grounded in the reality of life in Afghanistan and in exile. A new discourse that recognises migration as both a symptom of and solution to some of the economic, political and social problems facing Afghans would allow the development of a policy that puts Afghan interests and the protection of Afghan migrants first. Such a discourse would allow policymakers to understand that the problems facing migrants (lack of legal channels which create a demand for smugglers, limited understanding of migrant rights, isolation) are a result of the current construction of migration as a security problem, and of the solution as one of increased controls.

Pantomime Policymaking in Times of Crisis

The International Centre for Migration Policy Development was contracted by the EU to support the Afghan government to develop a Comprehensive Migration Policy (CMP), to build the government's capacity to reintegrate those returned and to prevent irregular migration.⁵³ In 2019, the policy was presented to the president, though in the absence of a budgeted action plan it was not approved. The EU had engaged a consultancy firm to work on a State and Resilience Building Contract. If the Afghan government fulfilled a number of tasks they would have access to €100 million. Most of the tasks had to do with setting up taxation systems, but one Key Performance Indicator was to prepare a costed action plan for the implementation of the CMP. In June, as fighting was taking place in 26 of the 34 provinces, Schuster was asked to be the technical advisor to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR), the Ministry designated to take the lead. As the Taliban advanced, meetings took place with officials from the Ministry of Finance, Interior, Justice and Labour. Discussions were undertaken on the actions necessary to implement the policy goals for which the Ministry was responsible, and then switching from what increasingly felt like fantasy

policymaking⁵⁴ to news from the provinces, the fears of the officials for their own lives, and those of their families and communities.

Throughout July and August, the mood became increasingly difficult, but work continued on this action plan, even though we knew it would never be implemented. Increasingly, civil society organisations in Europe were demanding a moratorium on forced return, and finally in August, some countries did announce that they would cease deportations. But not all: six EU states (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands) wanted to continue deporting and wrote to the EU commissioner Ylva Johansson on 10 August, arguing that halting returns "sends the wrong signal and is likely to motivate even more Afghan citizens to leave their home for the EU".⁵⁵ At that stage, the Taliban had already taken control of most provinces and two major cities. The consultants were continuing their work, meeting with officials, waiting for the EU to acknowledge the unreality of the situation and call a halt to what was happening. This had never happened. Schuster was drafting letters of recommendation and appeals for visas for MoRR colleagues, and Hussaini was working to assist university colleagues. In the week following the fall of Kabul, both were evacuated to Europe, Schuster from a camp beside the airport, Hussaini and his family having had experienced the chaos and shooting just outside.

Having spent years pressurising the Afghan government to stop emigration, within days, the EU appeared to do a sharp U-turn, telling the new Taliban government that it would be judged on whether it would allow all those who wished to do so, to leave Afghanistan. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Ghani government, and in sharp contrast to the situation up to July, demands for visas and even passports from those seeking to leave the country were temporarily suspended by the representatives of national governments inside the airport. How was the EU able to shift so abruptly from keeping people out to bringing people in? The collapse of the government was rapid and highly visible in the media; to have completely abandoned people would have called into question Europe's self-image as a liberal, human rights-driven institution. It could not openly abandon allies to the Taliban, constructed as the opposite of open, liberal, noble, EU saviours. But once most of the media moved on, that is what it did and did so very rapidly. Aside from that very small window 2021 and 2022 has seen Afghans imprisoned more effectively than ever before within their borders by the reluctance of other states to afford them refuge. Small numbers of people have been evacuated to Europe and the US, but many more await resettlement from neighbouring states to which they fled, or from countries such as Albania, Kosovo and the Gulf States to which they were moved for processing.

The contrasting response to the Ukraine crisis has been interesting. Russia invaded on 24 February and six days later the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) was activated for the first time since it was drafted in 1996, granting to Ukrainian refugees: residency, access to housing, social welfare assistance, medical care, legal guardianship and safe placement for

unaccompanied children and teenagers, access to education, the labour market and banking services. Perhaps most incredibly, it allowed Ukrainians to move to another EU country, before the issuance of a residence permit and to move freely in EU countries (other than the Member State of residence) for 90 days within a 180-day period. Without doubt, it was a useful instrument in the circumstances, but why was it not in operation in 2015, for the Syrians,⁵⁶ or in 2021 for the Afghans? It was, after all, designed as a response to: “the arrival in the Community of a large number of displaced persons, who come from a specific country or geographical area, whether their arrival in the Community was spontaneous or aided, for example through an evacuation programme”.⁵⁷

The EU Commission argued that the TPD was not implemented “due to its lack of an in-built compulsory solidarity mechanism to ensure a fair sharing of responsibility across member states”.⁵⁸ Yet, this did not prevent its implementation in March 2022. At the same time, private and state transport providers offered Ukrainian refugees free travel on buses, trains and planes; they have been offered free food, drink and accommodation. When the Syrians were welcomed to Europe, it was largely by the citizenry with hand-drawn signs, but now travelling through airports and train stations, there are large official posters in blue and yellow welcoming Ukrainians, signposting them to services. It is not that the European response to refugees has been significantly *changed* by the Ukrainian crisis; it is that the response to Ukrainians is so different to the treatment meted out to other refugees. For decades, demands from activists for more open, just and generous policies have been dismissed as idealistic, unrealistic, naïve. In particular, the arrival of approximately one million people, six years ago, was apparently a crisis that stretched the EU systems to the breaking point. Yet, post-pandemic, in a cost of living crisis 6.5 million Ukrainians had arrived into the EU within a month and there is no crisis. True, it is not clear how long this narrowly focused generosity will last, but it does demonstrate that numbers are not the argument. We make choices; those choices are particular, reflect political relationships and reveal the racism that underpins EU migration policy.⁵⁹

Conclusion: Why Do Migration Policies Fail in Afghanistan?

Whether or not a policy is deemed to have failed depends on how a policy is evaluated and who has analysed it. Anderson⁶⁰ points out that the stated goals of a policy may not be the actual goals. This certainly seems to have been the case with the Joint Way Forward. As pointed out by Anderson, whether a policy is judged a success or failure depends on which criteria are being used to measure it: European asylum policy in the past three years judged by human rights standards, by the number of people unable to access protection or other basic rights including to claim asylum, is a failure; judged according to the increasing public funds directed to expanding and multiplying private companies charged with policing migration controls it is a success for those businesses.

European policies with regard to migration continue to fail not because of resources, but to borrow Castles’ words, because they are about

migration. The rhetoric of development, rights and peace is currently nothing more than window dressing to legitimise policies that seek to control migration and promote returns. The only attempts to integrate new arrivals into Europe have been by individual local authorities and small groups of citizens. This is in spite of the evidence referred to by different European actors, in spite of the rhetoric of rights and development, in spite of the recognition that “vulnerable people cannot be left to resort to the criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers. There must be safe and legal ways for them to reach the EU”.⁶¹ There is neither the political courage nor the political will to challenge the dominant discourse or problematisation of Afghan migration or create the safe and legal channels that would reduce the costs and risks created by policies that force people to use smugglers. So long as policies mis-frame migration as a problem and set unrealistic and unreasonable policy goals for dealing with that problem, they are bound to fail. Such policies create instead a market for smugglers who Afghans are forced to use. Policy about and by Afghans need to recognise migrants as social agents for whom migration is a useful strategy for coping with profound structural challenges, who will not passively accept the constraints imposed on their mobility, who have the capacity to contribute to the well-being of both Afghanistan and their destination countries. Perhaps most importantly, policies should never be made by those who do not have to live with their consequences.

Notes

¹Alison Edgley, “Chomsky and the State,” *Politics* 15, no.3 (1995): 155.

²Liza Schuster, “Turning Refugees into ‘Illegal Migrants’,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 8 (January 2011): 1392-1407, and “A Sledgehammer to Crack a Nut,” *Social Policy and Administration* 39, no. 6 (October 2005): 606-621.

³Peter Blunt, Farid Mamundzay and Muqtader Nasery, “The Long and the Short of Policy Pantomime in Afghanistan,” *Progress in Development Studies* 17, no. 1 (2017): 67-88.

⁴Stephen Castles, “Why Migration Policies Fail?” *Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27, no.2 (March 2004): 205-227.

⁵Alessandro Monsutti, “Migration as a Rite of Passage: Young Afghans Building Masculinity and Adulthood in Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 40, no. 2 (April 2007): 167-185.

⁶Kristian Berg Harpviken, *Social Networks and Migration in Wartime Afghanistan*. Vol. 22. (Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁷Castles, “Why Migration Policies Fail?” 209.

⁸Liza Schuster, Reza Hussaini, Mona Hossaini, Razia Rezaie and Mohamud Riaz Khan Shinwari, “‘My Beloved Will Come Today or Tomorrow’ Time and the Left Behind,” in *Stealing Time: Migration, Temporalities and State Violence*, eds. M. Bhatia and V. Canning (London: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 1-23.

⁹Heaven Crawley and Brad K. Blitz, “Common Agenda or Europe's Agenda? International Protection, Human Rights and Migration from the Horn of Africa,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 12 (2018): 2269.

¹⁰Stephen Castles, “Migration Policies Are Problematic—Because They Are about Migration,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 9 (2017): 1543.

¹¹Bridget Anderson, "Towards a New Politics of Migration?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 9 (June 2017): 1527-1537.

¹²Castles, "Migration Policies Are Problematic," 1542.

¹³Bert Enserink, Joop Koppenjan and Igor Mayer, "A Policy Sciences View on Policy Analysis," in Wil A.H. Thissen and Warren Walker (eds) *Public Policy Analysis*, International Series in Operations Research and Management Science, edition 127, no. 978-1-4614-4602-6, December (Springer, 2013); Frank R. Pfetsch, "Power in International Negotiations: Symmetry and Asymmetry," *Negotiations* 16, no. 2 (January 2011): 39-56.

¹⁴Christina Boswell and James Hampshire, "Ideas and Agency: A Discursive Institutional Approach," *European Journal of Political Approach*, 56 (2016):133-150.

¹⁵Martin Baldwin-Edwards, Brad K. Blitz and Heaven Crawley, "The Politics of Evidence-based Policy in Europe's 'Migration Crisis'," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 12 (2019): 2139-2155.

¹⁶In fact, it was parallels between assumptions about the rationality of migration decisions and policy-making that shaped the research project on which this paper is based.

¹⁷Castles, "Why Migration Policies Fail?"

¹⁸Representations of migration and migrants in Afghan popular culture were examined. It revealed the heartache and loneliness caused by migration, as well as the importance of migration over centuries; also see Belgehis Alavi Jafari and Liza Schuster, "Representations of Exile in Afghan Oral Poetry and Songs," *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture* 10, no. 2 (October 2019): 183-203.

¹⁹Alessandro Monsutti, *War and Migration: Social Networks and Economic Strategies of the Hazaras of Afghanistan* (London: Routledge, 2005).

²⁰Maliha Safri, "The Transformation of the Afghan Refugee 1979-2009," *The Middle East Journal* 65, no. 4 (Autumn 2011): 587-601.

²¹Jelena Bjelica, "Caught Up in Regional Tensions? The Mass Return of Afghan Refugees from Pakistan," Afghanistan Analysts Network, last modified December 22, 2016,

<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/migration/caught-up-in-regional-tensions-the-mass-return-of-afghan-refugees-from-pakistan/>

²²H.Simon, *Administrative Behaviour, A Study of Decision Making Processes in Administrative Organizations* (MacMillan, New York, 1957)cited in Enserink, et al., "A Policy Sciences View": 20.

²³This was largely because appointments were primarily made for political reasons and not on the basis of expertise and because 'capacity building' was delivered overwhelmingly in English, at speed and by foreign 'experts' unfamiliar with Afghanistan.

²⁴European Commission, *Joint Commission-EEAS Non-paper on Enhancing Cooperation on Migration, Mobility and Readmission with Afghanistan* (Brussels: European Commission, 2016), doc. 6738/16 MIGR 43 COASI 19 RESTREINT UE.

²⁵Just as true in respect of the Horn of Africa, see Crawley and Blitz "Common Agenda," 2263.

²⁶Liza Schuster and Nassim Majidi, "What Happens Post-deportation? The Experience of Deported Afghans," *Migration Studies* 1, no. 2 (July 2013): 221-240.

²⁷Enserink, et al., "A Policy Sciences View," 21.

²⁸Pfetsch, "Power in International Negotiations."

²⁹Castles, "Why Migration Policies Fail": 214.

³⁰DG Devco, *Study on the Results and Impacts of EU Funded Projects in the Area of Voluntary Return and Reintegration* (Brussels: European Commission, 2015).

³¹European Parliament. *European Parliament Resolution of 14 December 2017 on the Situation in Afghanistan (2017/2932(RSP))* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2017).

³²European Commission “*Non-paper on Enhancing Cooperation*,”

³³Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi, conversation with Liza Schuster and Reza Hussaini, Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, Kabul, September 11, 2017.

³⁴Blunt et al., “The Long and the Short of Policy Pantomime.”

³⁵In interviews with Afghan officials in the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and among the EU delegation, he was referred to as ‘without any diplomatic skills’, ‘a bully’, ‘a nightmare’, and ‘undeserving of such a post’.

³⁶Pfetsch, “Power in International Negotiations”.

³⁷EU official, interview by Liza Schuster and Reza Hussaini, Kabul, May 25, 2017.

³⁸Pfetsch, “Power in International Negotiations”.

³⁹Enserink et al., “A Policy Sciences View,” 25.

⁴⁰Vivien Schmidt, “Speaking of Change: Why Discourse is Key to the Dynamics of Policy Transformation,” *Critical Policy Studies* 5, no. 2 (2011): 107.

⁴¹World Bank Group. *Forced Displacement and Development* (New York: World Bank Group, 2016).

⁴²Boswell and Hampshire “Ideas and Agency.”

⁴³Georg Menz, “Framing the Matter Differently: The Political Dynamics of European Union Labour Migration Policymaking,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 28, no. 4 (2015): 560.

⁴⁴“Council Conclusions on Afghanistan,” Foreign Affairs Council Meeting Luxemburg, The Council of the European Union, June 23, 2014, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28036/143322.pdf>

⁴⁵European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration* (Brussels: European Commission, 2015).

⁴⁶The only proposal on the table is an agreement (not yet signed) with Kuwait. There is nothing for those wishing to migrate to Europe. There are a handful of scholarships available for those wishing to study, but nothing for those wishing to work or claim asylum. Unless an Afghan is well-connected and or wealthy, there are no ‘legal channels’ available.

⁴⁷Boswell and Hampshire, “Ideas and Agency,” 3.

⁴⁸Liza Schuster, *The Use and Abuse of Political Asylum: A Comparison of British and German Asylum Policy and Practice* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

⁴⁹Florian Trauner, “Asylum Policy: the EU’s ‘Crises’ and the Looming Policy Regime Failure,” *Journal of European Integration* 38, no. 3 (2016): 311-325.

⁵⁰2015 March EU-Turkey Deal—In exchange of €3 billion, greater access to the EU and the resettlement of a small number of Syrians from Turkey, Turkey agreed to prevent migrants leaving its coasts for Greece, and to take back rejected arrivals.

⁵¹European Commission, *Non-paper on Enhancing Cooperation*.

⁵²2015 November Valletta Summit—in exchange of €1.8 billion and promises of further development aid, a group of Sahel countries promised to reduce migration to Europe and to take back those who made it to Europe; 2017 February EU-Libya Agreement—the EU, in particular Italy, had for years been paying Gaddafi to patrol Libya’s southern borders in an attempt to reduce the number of people arriving in Lampedusa and Sicily. As reported by CNN,

(<https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/14/africa/libya-migrant-auctions/index.html>), in spite of the violent and chaotic conditions in Libya (CNN 2017) in 2016/2017, the EU agreed an MoU to pay the Libyan coastguards to turn back boats carrying migrants (Selm 2015). Also see, Joanne van Selm, "Missing in Action: The Unused Temporary Protection Directive," *Migration Policy Practice* 5, no.4 (2015): 15–19.

⁵³In August–October 2016, Schuster was placed in the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations by ICMPD to provide support to the Ministry colleagues working on these three goals

⁵⁴Blunt et al., "The Long and the Short of Policy Pantomime".

⁵⁵Georgi Gotev "Six countries urge EU to continue Afghan Deportations," *Euractiv*, August 11, 2021, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/six-countries-urge-eu-to-continue-afghan-deportations/>

⁵⁶Selm, "Missing in Action".

⁵⁷"Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on Minimum Standards for Giving Temporary Protection in the Event of a Mass Influx of Displaced Persons and on Measures Promoting a Balance of Efforts Between Member States in Receiving Such Persons and Bearing the Consequences Thereof," *Official Journal of the European Communities* Council 44 (August 2001): 14, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2001:212:TOC>.

⁵⁸H. Deniz Genç and N. Ash Sirin Oner, "Why Not Activated? The Temporary Protection Directive and the Mystery of Temporary Protection in the European Union," *International Journal of Political Science & Urban Studies* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–18.

⁵⁹Moustafa Bayoumi, "They Are 'Civilised' and 'Look Like Us': The Racist Coverage of Ukraine," *The Guardian*, March 3, 2022; Stephen. McCloskey, "The War in Ukraine Has Revealed a Hierarchy of Victims," *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review* 34 (2022).

⁶⁰Anderson, "Towards a New Politics of Migration?"

⁶¹European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration*.

Higher Education Concerns for Young Afghan Refugees in Delhi

By

Anushka *

Nation, refugee and education are conflicting scenarios which may or may not present a case of juxtaposition. Nation, when not competent, obstructs the identities of the people on the move, giving them the title of refugee. As per the United Nations, a refugee is one who, as a result of events that occurred before January 1, 1951, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or unwilling to take advantage of that country's protection because of his well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion; or who does not have a nationality and is outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events.¹ Refugees are under constant threat of identity and this leads to their marginalisation which may impact their future. This can be in particular stressful and disruptive for the youth who are on the move. Refugee youth group holds the largest potential and possesses significant demographic dividends which, when channelled properly, can become a driving force behind a country's growth indices.² Further, it was elaborated that youth needs education to channelise their energy so that they are able to change their situation, improve their living index and thus can prove themselves beneficial for the residing state.

Higher education plays a critical role in the information economy, which is growing as a result of the acquisition of advanced skills and knowledge. It has largely been understood that the most significant path to growth and poverty reduction is higher education.³ The function of education is to build up human capital and human growth. As training supports the achievement of higher education and fosters a specific set of fundamental learning outcomes, it becomes basic to other abilities.⁴ There is a primary limitation in achieving this knowledge, education or skill aspect as a refugee. The goal of this article is to look into the difficulties faced by refugee students

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who have moved to India from Afghanistan and who are pursuing higher education. As the government has concerns for its own citizens, it has made certain areas of governance skewed and non-discriminatory;⁵ as a result, the difficulties of Afghan refugees are not reflected effectively. It is critical to concentrate on the concerns of Afghan refugees and understand them from their standpoint.

There are about 10,000 Afghan refugees in Delhi, 90 per cent of whom belong to Hindu or Sikh faiths, the religious minorities in Afghanistan; the remaining 10 per cent belong to Hazaras, Pashtun and other communities.⁶ In January 2020, there were 16,333 Afghan refugees and Afghan asylum seekers, as recorded.⁷ The quantity and area coverage of the Afghan refugee population in India, which they claim to be in thousands for years have been investigated.⁸ Ghosh explains the complexity of gauging the actual number as it might depend on the understanding of an individual's definition of the term 'refugee'. The subtleties of refugees' participation in higher education have been widely examined in the literature,⁹ but there has been little discussion about young Afghan refugees' accessibility to Indian higher education. Furthermore, as a refugee and their concerns have recently been a subject of debate due to many reasons, for example, apprehensions raised by the nation hosting refugees, the inadequacy of resources, rights not granted to refugees etc., it becomes necessary to investigate the issues that young Afghan refugee students face as they approach higher education. A refugee's decision to enrol in higher education is influenced by a number of factors that can discourage him/her at the time of application. This research attempts to provide significant insights into young Afghan refugees' higher education in Delhi by analysing:

- Why Delhi is a chosen destination for higher education
- The problems in accessing higher education in India
- The support mechanisms which may be available for Afghan refugee students

The nuances of higher education from the perspectives of Afghan refugees in India are explorative in nature. From December 2020 until the end of February 2021, focused interviews, using the snowball sampling method, were conducted with nine Afghan refugee students enrolled in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, or in other courses in higher education institutes and residing in Delhi. All interviewees were accorded refugee status, by UNHCR and had the refugee ID card issued by UNHCR.

India and Refugees

A slew of international human rights treaties has been ratified by India. Despite this, it is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees.¹⁰ As a result, it lacks a clear and independent law to govern refugees. The care and treatment of refugees in

India are governed by the Registration of Foreigners Act of 1939, the Foreigners Act of 1946 and the Foreigners Order of 1948. All current Indian laws including the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Indian Penal Code and the Indian Evidence Act apply to refugees.¹¹ In India, there are three categories of refugees. All Category I refugees are fully covered by the Indian government (for example, Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka). Category II refugees (for example, Afghan refugees) have been granted refugee status by the UNHCR and are protected under the "non-refoulement" principle (no refugee-providing state may in any way expulse or send a refugee back to the borders of nations where his or her life or freedom would be in danger due to their race, religion, nationality, membership in a specific social group, or political beliefs.). Category III refugees have arrived in India and have been accepted into the local community despite not being recognised by either the Indian government or the UNHCR (for example, the Chin refugees from Myanmar living in the state of Mizoram).¹² Refugee rights and entitlements are currently primarily determined by India's Constitution and the Foreigners Act of 1946. It is also worth noting that UNHCR is yet to sign a branch office agreement with the Indian government; UNHCR operates in India under the auspices of UNDP.¹³ India has signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as its optional protocols, providing refugee children in the country access to basic rights, including the right to education. The Indian Right to Education Act of 2009 guarantees primary education to refugees and asylum seekers in India. As a result, elementary school education is provided free of charge to the Indian refugee community. When it comes to higher education, students, on the other hand, do not have many rights.

Delhi as a Preferred Destination

A major proportion of Afghan refugees is settled in Delhi or nearby places like Faridabad and Haryana. Delhi being the capital city has easy accessibility to resources (information about programmes, support of relatives, higher education scholarship, various support programmes etc); the urban sprawl includes the National Capital Region with more employment opportunities; the closer proximity to UNHCR which is established only in Delhi and is the only official organisation facilitating and being responsible for refugees.¹⁴ When interviews of young Afghan refugees were conducted in Delhi, it was found that the respondents migrated with their families to India, when their lives were at stake and they thought that India would be their safe haven. Every respondent had a different reason to move to Delhi. A few had no particular reason to move to India but decided on it being the only choice available. For some, the political and economic environment had appeased them to stay in Delhi.

Riyaz (pseudonym) explained that he chose Delhi as a destination because "it was my father's and my dream to pursue higher education in India so that I could get into Afghan administration after the completion of my studies." In fact, the Indian higher education system is highly valued by the refugees with a potent consideration for employment in the ministries of

Afghanistan. Employment in Afghanistan ministries is a fascination because not many other economic opportunities are available in Afghanistan. Ramia (pseudonym) expressed, "India, especially Delhi, provided business ties which in the past had been explored by my family members. In fact, my assumption is that Delhi being the capital city would be promising as are most capital cities compared to other ones." Delhi also appears to her to be the hub where more facilities are available.¹⁵ She thought that UNHCR is the sole point of connection to seek resettlement and to maintain that constant assurance, one needs to live near it. She further suggested that for most Afghan refugees it is the UNHCR that is regarded as its embassy rather than the Afghanistan Embassy.

Many respondents considered India to be a transit nation with Delhi as the centre of access to information from UNHCR. Two reasons can be outlined for considering Delhi more relevant as a space of transit rather than a destination.¹⁶ First, an in-between process is critical for some who have been constantly on the go since they cannot even imagine stopping.¹⁷ However, this in-between process sometimes causes certain experiences or shifts in their movement which may make their destination and starting point less prominent, lending more importance to the very event. So, it is the journey that holds more significance. Second, transit countries are geographically situated in such a way that they act as intermediary stations between the departure and destination locations.¹⁸ A transit country has certain traits:

- Exists between crossroads of a Global North and Global South
- Shares border with developed countries
- Has a high flow of migrants
- Offers the possibility for informal entry to a neighbouring country, yet has restrictive policies towards migrants

A transit country is unprepared to confront migrants and their needs and is approachable not only geographically but also socio-politically through policies that convert the Global South into a gate and bridge between the first and the third world. It is the capability to migrate which plays a crucial factor in the mobility of Afghans and transit migrants.¹⁹ Such capabilities act as catalyst for mobility between one's aspirations and failure to do so.²⁰ Although the character traits for mobility may not be same as one may have good and elaborative network in the country that one aspires to be in or may sell off the property or may have influential background to finance the journey,²¹ while, another might be indebted or exploited and abused in the journey, still others who might not be able to reach the destination due to lack of capital. There are also social networks which play a vital role even when one's family is not able to provide the economic capital needed; moreover, economic capital without the required knowledge to move will also not work in an individual's favour.²²

Concerns of Afghan Refugees

To understand the current issues of the young Afghan refugee community in higher education, we must first examine their earlier curriculum pattern. As a result, a modest attempt has been made to shed light on the subjects and curriculum pattern that students in Afghanistan have learnt in the past. The students' decision-making skills and access to higher education in the country where they have sought shelter are also impacted by the previous orientation of the curriculum and courses they have previously studied.

Subjects Studied in Afghanistan

Many students engaged in higher education in Afghanistan were forced to relocate to India since their lives were in danger. Therefore, education became a lesser concern to the refugees at that time; however, their unawareness of India's higher education impacts their application to universities. The stark difference being the structure and design of the education curriculum designed in Afghanistan. Education in Afghanistan is not organised into disciplines as in India; instead, 17 courses are taught from kindergarten through the twelfth grade every year. The Afghan system's unique feature is that in the twelfth standard students are taught science, technology, commerce and society all at the same time. Another notable feature, as mentioned by interviewees is that the Afghanistan Board of Education does not include economics as a subject in their curriculum. In Afghanistan, secondary education has two levels:

- First cycle or lower secondary, also known as *Maktabeh Motevaseteh*, is pursued for three years from age 12 to 14, i.e., from the seventh to the ninth grade.
- The second cycle or higher or senior secondary, also called *Doreyeh Aali*, extends for another three years and includes the tenth to twelfth grades i.e., from 15 to 17 years of age.

The curriculum from the seventh to ninth grades include subjects such as religious studies, local languages, mathematics, natural sciences, social studies, foreign languages (English, German, French and Russian) and physical education. Students who pass the ninth grade can continue their senior secondary education. During this stage, students may choose to pursue technical and vocational education rather than senior secondary education. The curriculum for higher secondary education includes all the subjects of lower secondary and a few more of natural science and social science subjects. In total, they study every year for three consecutive years, a combination of 17 to 18 subjects such as Islamic studies, agriculture, education, art and culture, mathematics or history. Thus, higher secondary education includes all the subjects and no specialisation is provided unlike in Indian higher secondary education. Seven out of nine respondents described the same pattern of school education in Afghanistan, as mentioned above. None of the

respondents pursued technical and vocational education programme, so no information could be collected regarding vocational and technical courses. After the completion of both higher secondary and technical and vocational education, a nation-wide entrance examination is being conducted known as Concours-KONKURS General State Examination for the pursuit of higher education.

Subjects Studied in India

After coming to India, choosing a course had many aspects: a few people debated, decided and even regretted a little studying the course. Refugee students who had first studied in Indian schools and then moved on to Indian higher education were comparatively better aware of the subjects and courses they wanted to study and pursue, respectively. Many students chose their subjects of specialisation with their future employment prospects in mind, so some students enrolled in classes because they were intrigued by the subject's concept, and for a few others, it was a whole new experience pursuing the subject about which they knew nothing or very little. But they also did not want to stray too far from the career path they wanted to pursue. Young Afghan refugees face a number of challenges before enrolling to higher education institutes; a few are outlined here.

i) Language Barrier: A barrier to higher education enrolment is language. Additionally, it calls for some type of connection to secondary education. A potential emphasis is laid on the knowledge of the English language, which is a medium of instruction in the classroom.²³ Forced migration tends to bring discontinuation in tertiary education which brings in significant educational gaps.²⁴ As it has been explained, though most of the refugees do know a tantamount of English which makes their travel, stay and survival easy, when it comes to knowing a proficient level of English that is acceptable in academics, it becomes a point of contention.²⁵ As English language is a crucial element in Indian education, they need to take extra classes to learn the language or utilise other coping techniques to get a basic comprehension of the subjects. In Afghanistan, English is taught as a second language in schools beginning in the fourth grade, when students are nine years old. The majority of the course syllabi are written in Dari. Many, who arrived in India, when they are young to attend school, experience linguistic challenges, which they are able to overcome with the support of private tutoring programmes. Additionally, it has been observed and explained that while language can be a barrier, many people are eager to learn and sincerely enrol in language programmes.²⁶ The findings of numerous research have demonstrated that some refugee students feel motivated to learn and increase their knowledge.²⁷ Additionally, groups like Khalsa Diwan Welfare Society and Don Bosco provide English language training/coaching classes for young Afghan refugees who come to Delhi to pursue higher education after completing their secondary education. However, Sikh Hindu Afghan refugees are not permitted to enrol in Don Bosco's English programmes.²⁸

ii) Missing Qualifications and Documents: Identity certificates are an essential part of refugee security because they are the first line of defence against arbitrary detention and deportation, as well as the first step towards obtaining social services.²⁹ As a result, the body in charge of issuing documents plays a crucial role in the refugee protection scheme.³⁰ Case studies show that when host countries are in charge of determining refugee status and issuing certificates, they are often inefficient, and when the responsibility is assigned to UNHCR, the agency's activities are restricted. Refugees in Thailand have been arrested or detained in an environment of bureaucratic disregard for their UNHCR refugee status papers.³¹ In Pakistan, UNHCR has not been allowed to screen or register refugees living outside the camps.³² The Department of Home Affairs in South Africa has been inconsistent in providing identification to known refugees. Asylum decisions can take up to three years, leaving refugees without identification for an extremely long time.³³ ID cards of refugees play an important role in acquiring admission to universities. However, on many occasions, the refugee ID cards are not taken into consideration by schools at the time of their enrolment.³⁴ Visas are also accorded to refugees who wish to apply for higher education institutions or for a work permit. Such measures keep them hopeful till the time they are able to access the refugee card.

Students, who enrolled themselves for higher education in India, after spending significant years in Afghanistan universities, did not join immediately, but only after a few months to a year's break. This time was basically used for exploring and understanding the language, the courses they would want to pursue and the admission process. The absence of centralised information systems for refugees about the higher education system in India hampers their admission process in higher education.³⁵ It might be essential for some refugees to enrol for a few years in post-secondary school to obtain the documents or certifications that will facilitate their entry into higher education. The lack of documents like academic qualifications and birth certificate indeed act as a hindrance in the enrolment process of higher education.³⁶ Similar problems have been faced by refugees in Greece, where a lack of documentation and of Greek language proficiency limited their ability to enrol in higher education and prevented them from attending classes at public universities. They also discovered, through an interview with a manager of a private college that the young refugee's ability to obtain any type of scholarship for higher education is harmed by a lack of documentation of the refugee's educational profile, thus far, including proficiency level in English. The UNHCR, over the years, has maintained and established relations with education authorities so that the application process of refugees entails less complicated documentation during admissions.³⁷ In some cases, where regulations are too strict to let go off the norms, BOSCO intervenes to support the refugees (e.g., by providing language classes, guidance in certain subjects).³⁸

iii) Course and Classroom Acclimatisation: Refugees in distress frequently acclimatise to the new system and are influenced by the host societies.³⁹ There are a variety of parameters that refugees adjust to, and the patterns and reasons for these adjustments are not always the same.⁴⁰ Afghan refugees in Indian higher education, in particular, need to adapt to the new academic course. The satisfaction with the course comes after grasping the new curriculum and learning the new course. The level of satisfaction of respondents with their respective courses was determined through questions asked with regard to acclimatisation. Only six of the nine responders said they were happy with the courses they were pursuing. The reason attributed to it was also the availability of peer support to help them understand the subject in detail. Having a peer group that facilitates as a support system is a prior requirement for any student. When a refugee undergoes the stress of assimilation at a new place it becomes very important to have the support of his/her fellow classmates in understanding a new course altogether. All respondents indeed made an account of easy assimilation in terms of understanding the new course or syllabus. Further, transitioning from one level of education to another one is a tough process for an individual, especially for refugees who frequently struggle to complete their secondary education.⁴¹ So the necessary completion of schooling often delays the refugee's integration into higher education.⁴² Maliha (pseudonym), a second-year B.Com student at Delhi University said that she had a good understanding of the current course and is satisfied with the subject she is studying. The reason for her easy transition and ability to make a firm course choice can be related to the fact that she completed her senior secondary education in an Indian institution and was able to choose her professional choice effortlessly.

Subsequently, there have been students who have some say over the course of action toward their future ambitions.⁴³ Ramia (pseudonym) said, "My father had laid emphasis on pursuing law due to the profession being women-friendly. It provides a sense of power and independence which a woman of the twenty-first century definitely needs. He wanted me to study law to represent Afghan refugee women." Besides, every respondent, regardless of any circumstance, made their own educational decisions. In fact, not all were influenced or pressurised by family members when deciding on a path of study. Despite the lack of evidence of family impact, 90 per cent respondents had briefly discussed the courses they would like to take with their families.

Refugees enrolled in higher education generally opt for IGNOU or Delhi University.⁴⁴ Sebi (pseudonym) enrolled in a computer science course at Sharda University. She was receiving a DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship at the time, but after a year of learning the intricacies of the curriculum, she decided to drop out. She was quoted saying:

There are a number of reasons for not continuing with the course, the most important of which was that the subject was not being taught in

the most efficient manner. I want more in-depth lectures in class because I am very new to the subject, and even frequent one-to-one discussion was inadequate. I eventually had to change from Sharda University to Indira Gandhi Open University. I also changed my subject from computer science to social work programme, having been dissatisfied with the former. This change in course and university affected me immensely as I no longer could avail the DAFI scholarship. But I wish to continue my higher education in the right direction and strive for a better future.'

On the contrary, Riyaz (pseudonym) said, "The subject I am pursuing is commerce and I had not at all studied accountancy at school in Afghanistan. In fact, I am really thankful to my classmates and even lecturers who were constantly helping me understand the subject from the basics."

The main concern for young Afghan refugees enrolled in higher education in Delhi has been the feedback on their performance in class and assignments. The teacher-student ratio is sometimes quite overwhelming; this acts as a deterrent to having personal discussions and individual attention. So, it becomes imperative for Afghan refugees to analyse their performance through scores reflected in assignments. The evaluation of assignments is satisfactory for some and concern for many. During the interview, five respondents were completely unhappy with the pattern of evaluation and the remarks. Huma (pseudonym), a student of psychology, at Delhi University, was completely displeased with the way instructors graded the projects. She raised her concern about the assessment methods adopted in the classroom and said, "We are now trying to study new subjects in a new environment, and when instructors mark our assignments without even alerting us, we are not able to learn anything. Constructive feedback, which is crucial to progress, is mostly lacking in the established university itself."

Fee Structure and Financial Support or Scholarship

The cost of higher education is a barrier to the participation of refugees in higher education. In fact, tuition fees differ greatly depending on the country and the type of institution (public or private, certificate or degree-granting, etc.). There are also several nations, for example, Brazil, Denmark and Finland, where there are no tuition fees.⁴⁵ However, the cost of higher education is not restricted to tuition fees only. Study materials, health insurance and food throughout the study period are additional expenses that need to be borne by the refugees.

Scholarship

Afghan students pursuing higher education frequently seek financial assistance in the form of a scholarship. UNHCR, Germany, Denmark and the Czech Republic, in partnership with DAFI, offer scholarships to a few selected refugees in India who are selected through an admission test for only the

undergraduate degree. This scholarship is offered in the asylum-seeking country or the applicant's home country. DAFI scholarship, in tandem with the German Embassy and the UNHCR, supports undergraduate students monetarily.⁴⁶ As per the scholarship DAFI⁴⁷ guidelines, tertiary students need to try inculcating the following abilities:

- Become self-reliant and competent for employment and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Gain awareness and leadership skills that will help students sustain a peaceful atmosphere in their host countries and when they return to their home countries
- Inculcate ethical form of lifelong learning
- Attract and make students aware of the importance of education through role models and societal and community engagements.

The basic condition for applying for a UNHCR scholarship is to obtain UNHCR refugee status. The UNHCR only conducts interviews after the asylum seeker status is changed to refugee status. Moreover, approximately 20 students are chosen each year from a large number of applicants. Even though the scholarship is provided by UNHCR, students are still admitted as foreign students and must go through the same admission process as any other foreign student.

DAFI scholarship, which is one of the scholarship available for Afghan refugee students, does not promise adequate benefits monetarily. Earlier, the scholarship⁴⁸ included tuition fees, admission fees, registration fees, money to buy books, and a monthly stipend of INR 3,800 to all the selected candidates. But currently, all four recipients have mentioned an increased scholarship structure. All of the respondents were displeased as the revised amount is inadequate to cover all expenses. A monthly stipend of INR 5,000 is also not enough to cover monthly expenses. Farhaan (pseudonym), who studies political science and commutes daily from Malviya Nagar to Kalkaji, adds: "As the cost of living rises in this cosmopolitan city, so do the expenses; daily travel from home to college is becoming more expensive, and an auto ride during an emergency is a luxury that cannot be afforded on a daily basis with this fellowship." DAFI scholarship in 2021 is categorised as follows:

- INR 20,000 per year for college fees
- INR 10,000 per year for books and stationery
- INR 5,000 per month as a fellowship, making INR 60,000 yearly

*Source: DAFI Scholarship, 2021 Report*⁴⁹

Many respondents were asked if their fellowship had been consistent since they enrolled, and nearly all confirmed positively. Additionally, an enquiry was made about any possibility of any future increase in fellowship, but majority of the respondents refused to answer the question and only one did explain that scholarship increases are contingent on the budget that the

German embassy sets for DAFI researchers in India each year. If the budget is increased, the fellowship and tuition price, which is a scholarship for students, will be increased; otherwise, it will remain the same.

The scholarship can be granted only once and only to one member of the family. If a family has two wards enrolled in higher education, only the one, who is able to clear the entrance or interview process, can avail it and the other student sibling cannot even apply. Also, if a student receives a scholarship and then changes universities or courses, the award will be terminated and one cannot apply again. Even though a conscious attempt was made to ask questions about the legitimacy and time range of the scholarship, all of the interviewees were found to be aware of the terms and conditions of the DAFI fellowship. Moreover, when a student is unable to complete the studies within the agreed-upon time frame, the scholarship does not get extended. Every interviewee stated that the scholarship is only for a three-year term. If the scholarship is not completed within the three-year time span, it will be forfeited. Even a DAFI scholar who was studying B.Sc. in computer science at Sharda University subsequently realised that social work, rather than computer science, was her vocation. After a year, she changed her major from Computer Science to B.A. in Social Work at IGNOU, resulting in her forfeiting her scholarship and its benefits. It is no longer available to her family, despite the fact that her younger brother is enrolled in higher school.

The tuition fees also differ widely by students' residency status,⁵⁰i.e., for refugees, some countries waive tuition expenses, while others offer the home fee. In the case of India, there is no such option due to which Afghan refugees have to bear the consequences of learning. Others classify refugees as international students and charge them a higher tuition cost.

Higher Education Fees

After overcoming the barriers which act as primary stages of the hurdle, Afghan refugee students enrolled in higher education in Delhi, then have to arrange for the means to access higher education. Despite the fact that there are several possibilities for programme selection, refugees are less likely to pursue those courses owing to their high costs; the refugee students tend to save the money, which might be needed for their survival at the new place.⁵¹ The same might be the reason for not attending higher education for a few others too, which leads to the percentage of students enrolling in higher education very less. Only 5 per cent refugees have access to higher education, which is far lower than the global average of 39 per cent for non-refugees.⁵² Furthermore, there are certain number of aids, scholarships or alternatives which do exist and are only extended to national students and not refugees.⁵³ So the lack of any type of financial assistance acts as a deterrent, although in the case of Afghan refugees in India, only BOSCO facilitates DAFI scholarship. All respondents, with the exception of one, agreed that the cost of attending college was high in light of the aforementioned concern. Only one respondent disagreed with the fact that tuition fees were excessive. Sania (pseudonym) commented, "I enrolled in Sharda University for a degree in

political science and also did not receive any scholarship. I am very upset with the university's cost structure. Sharda University is a private institution which charges a tuition fee of around 1050 USD. It has become difficult for me to bear the fee.”

Another dimension added to the bearing of high education costs is the burden of enrolment of refugee students under the same category as foreign students. Hence, an Afghan refugee student is enrolled as a foreign national and the fees levied are in accordance with foreign student standards. Few countries, for example, Canada, also classify refugees as international students and charge them a higher tuition cost⁵⁴. As a result, the expensive price structure for refugee students adds to the burden of being stateless.

According to the respondent, the fee levied for Afghan refugee students in Delhi is three times that of the fees paid by Indian nationals. The expenses that Afghan refugees incur as students in particular, can be a disincentive for them to pursue higher education. In some situations, students are able to pay the fees because their families are able to work or run a business, but for many, the inability to rely on family income has become a source of misery. Although there were a number of students enrolled on a scholarship, none of the respondents' families were financially secured enough to bear the full responsibility of higher education.

Further, fees paid in addition to the tuition fees, for example, the miscellaneous or extra-curricular fees including sports, laboratories, libraries, and other services can be an expensive or unaffordable affair. The four recipients who were availing the scholarships admitted that fees paid in addition to tuition fees were not at all pocket-friendly. Although for three scholarship recipients paying extra-curricular fees was not an out-of-budget affair. Due to extensive discussions with them, it was found that they were engaged in paid volunteering and internships while studying for undergraduate courses which made these extra fees somewhat affordable for them.

Conclusion

Despite an increase in the population of Afghan refugees in Delhi considerable support from the UNHCR and the Government of India is still lacking. Though UNHCR's refugee card does provide them a permit to pursue higher education in India, it does not ensure any special status or recognition in college admissions, in fact, it adds a challenge to their dreams. Although certain measures and assistance are provided to them by DAFI, BOSCO, and Khalsa Diwan Society, the economic and social crisis remains unresolved. While Indian higher education broadens the prospects for work and livelihood, the refugee status impedes the opportunities for Afghan refugees. So the challenges continue to persist in the Indian higher education system. The reality is that their options will be limited until (a) the educational system collaborates with societal organisations; (b) if assimilated, it is recognised as a demographic dividend; and (c) all parts of the higher education institution contribute, taking into account the willingness (willingness in terms of mobility has been taken into consideration) of young

Afghan refugees to meet the demands of Indian higher education system. Refugees' identities lead to marginalisation, which may have an impact on future progress. These growth aspects can be in particular stressful and disruptive for the youth population who are on the move. The Afghan refugee youth population yields great demographic dividend factors which when utilised in a more channelised way can become a push factor for the growth indices of a nation. The young generation requires a strong educational opportunity to be able to alter their condition or be beneficial to the residing state, and most importantly, to enhance their living standards.

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The Necropolitics of Canada's Afghan Resettlement Programmes

By

Kushan Azadah *

With the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021, Afghanistan experienced another increased wave of mass displacement. This accelerated the country's existing human rights crisis and humanitarian catastrophe that stemmed from earthquakes, successive droughts and political violence.¹ In the years leading up to the Taliban takeover, severe droughts impacted more than two-thirds of the population, leaving hundreds of thousands as internally displaced persons (IDPs).² In the subsequent years, the Taliban's reign only served to increase the rates of displacement as people attempted to flee their homelands based on fears of persecution stemming from political, religious, ethnic and gender violence. Especially, Afghan women,³ Shia Hazarite Muslims⁴ and those who worked alongside and supported the United States and its NATO allies over the past two decades,⁵ find themselves in a sorry plight. Despite the prominent role of Western states in the country since the war began, most countries seem reluctant to adopt an accommodating position towards the migration of these groups, leaving many either internally displaced, fearing for their lives, or in precarious circumstances within neighbouring countries that have long exceeded their capacity to accommodate the millions of Afghans who are in need of resettlement.

This has fuelled criticism against Western countries like Canada for not only failing to protect Afghans, but also endangering them, especially those who worked alongside NATO troops as allies. Many considered this a tremendous disappointment, given that such countries entered the war in the name of restoring modern-liberal principles like peace, development, women's rights and international security. Some scholars highlight that these missions not only failed to meet such objectives, but also remained unsuccessful to curb widespread violence, corruption and persistent use of narcotics, with some even arguing that these issues were exacerbated by NATO

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intervention.⁶ Others who argued in favour of NATO's achievements during their post-2001 reconstruction efforts, nevertheless acknowledged that the Taliban undermined and even regressed such gains as they set severe restrictions on women's rights, media freedom and education almost immediately after assuming state control in the aftermath of US withdrawal.⁷

In response to these developments, the government of Canada pledged to resettle at least 40,000 Afghan refugees "as quickly and safely as possible".⁸ It created two main programmes dedicated to attain these goals. One is specifically designed for the Afghans who assisted Canadian troops, including their immediate family members. The other, called the 'humanitarian programme', is intended for Afghan civilians who, although did not directly aid Canada, are nevertheless at risk of losing their lives due to fears of persecution. However, instead of alleviating criticism, state practices and policies directed towards Afghan resettlement only attracted further cause for grievance since these programmes were launched in 2021.⁹ Much of this attention was generated by the slow processing of resettlement cases and the restrictive policies in the state's legal administrative approach. By August 2022, a year since the making of its pledge, Canada officially welcomed only slightly over 17,000 people.¹⁰ Critiques of state practice and policy increased following the news regarding Canada's disproportionately quick response to the conflict in Ukraine where it approved the entry of over 41,000 Ukrainians in less than one month since the announcement of the Canada-Ukraine Authorisation for Emergency Travel (CUAET) programme in March 2022.¹¹ In other words, Canada had yet to meet its pledge of 40,000 Afghan resettlements, which it gave almost a year ago, but it far exceeded that number in only a few weeks for Ukrainians through temporary residence pathways. Unlike the programme designed for Afghan resettlement, the CUAET did not set a limit to the number of cases it would approve. This further problematised the state's legal-administrative approaches towards its immigration and refugee programmes, and the standards in which the state determines and manages its humanitarian impulse for a given issue.

Indeed, these recent developments in state practices and policies raise important questions about why the state employs one process for Afghans and another for Ukrainians. The reasons provided vary across state actors, journalists, scholars and activists. For instance, some argue that the differences reflect the existing systemic structures of racism in Canada, privileging white Europeans over racialised peoples from the Global South.¹² The comments made by senior foreign correspondent Charlie D'Agata on a CBS News broadcast report from Kyiv in February 2022, only serve to anchor such views: "[Ukraine] isn't a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan, that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilised, relatively European—I have to choose those words carefully, too—city, one where you wouldn't expect that, or hope that it's going to happen."¹³

In a similar vein, some scholars point to the double standards in media focus and the disproportionate provision of humanitarian aid between such cases.¹⁴ This trend can be seen more broadly across Western states, encouraging sentiments among some that Afghans have been "forgotten" or

even “left to die”.¹⁵ However, others point to the specificities of the political climates of a refugee's home-country as the determining factor.¹⁶ To the latter, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau provided a similar explanation, adding that the main challenges in the Afghan resettlement programmes result more from the chaotic situation in Afghanistan and the Taliban's lack of cooperation than they do from any of Canada's perceived systemic issues.¹⁷ He claimed this lack of cooperation slows down the necessary security checks for those still in the country. Other state-officials cite reasons regarding Canada's capacity as a limiting factor, not their willingness to help. As Aidan Strickland, spokesperson for the Immigration Minister Sean Fraser, states:

The Government of Canada has received hundreds of thousands of communications from those expressing interest in coming to Canada since the fall of Kabul. Regrettably, this is a far larger number than we can bring to Canada.... The unfortunate reality is that not everyone who expressed interest in coming to Canada will be eligible under the special programs for Afghanistan We are doing everything we can to help Afghans inside and outside of Afghanistan.¹⁸

Although this may provide some answers for the long delays and limited volume of Afghan resettlement cases on their own accord, such statements fall short in providing sufficient explanation when looking into its differences with the CUAET, and the measures that put Afghan nationals through “nine degrees of security scrutiny” compared to their Ukrainian counterparts.¹⁹

The following study aims at providing a deeper exploration of the practices and policies initiated by Canada towards the issues of Afghan displacement. It examines the socio-legal and political aspects of Canada's special programmes for Afghan resettlement while using the CUAET as a point of comparison. The study directs its analysis through two main lines of inquiry. First, in what ways, if at all, does Canada employ state practices indicative of systemic discrimination in its approach to Afghan displacement. Second, what role, if any, do modern liberal discourses (e.g., security, humanitarianism, and freedom) play in facilitating the conduct of Canada's border politics, as it pertains to these cases? In pursuit of this endeavour, the study will analyse the key aspects of these programmes, which includes (a) the criteria and eligibility requirements for entrance into the country; (b) the accessibility of pathways for temporary and permanent residence; and (c) state-provided justifications for specific requirements and/or exemptions.

The study draws significantly on Mbembe's theory of necropolitics, a framework he develops from Foucault's notion of biopower. This aligns with a growing body of scholarship in the past few years that examines the social and political landscape of Afghanistan and its peoples through the lens of necropolitics.²⁰ However, the literature has yet to engage with the Canadian streams for temporary and permanent residence, and the role, if any, that international law might play in managing and facilitating such pathways. This article seeks to contribute to the literature by addressing this gap. By drawing

on the theory of necropolitics, the study can draw our focus to the contemporary forms of subjugation of Afghan life to the power of death, and how this reconfigures the relations among their resistance, sacrifice and terror.²¹ Necropolitics operates through necropower, which can either entail the terror of actual death or take on a more 'benevolent' form which results in the destruction of a culture to save racialised peoples from themselves. Mbembe argues that necropower operates "in the interest of maximum destruction...and the creation of *death-worlds*".²² These death-worlds embody unique forms of social existence where large populations of peoples are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead. These worlds represent repressed topographies of cruelty that blur the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom. The study employs this framework through critical discourse (CDA) and textual legal analyses of the publicly available government and media information regarding these programmes. The article begins with a brief account of the international response to Afghan displacement. It then proceeds with a discussion of Canada's special immigration pathways for Afghan resettlement, detailing the criteria and eligibility requirements involved. The study concludes with a discussion of its implications on the future of Afghan peoples who, in their struggles for survival, seek out new lives in countries in the Global North, like Canada.

The International Response to Afghan Displacement

In the wake of Afghanistan's most recent wave of mass displacement, its people struggle against regional and international barriers that restrict their pathways for resettlement outside the country.²³ The Taliban controls all mainland crossing points between the country and its neighbouring states, and those seeking to leave must present valid travel documents to pass. Acquiring these documents poses some expected challenges for the people under the current regime. Yet, they serve a necessary condition, albeit not always a sufficient one, for legitimate travel in a world of international border regimes and biometric security screenings. Visas and passports not only grant passage into foreign countries but make possible the application for resettlement once/if crossings are made successfully. Such requirements nevertheless foster a dangerous landscape for the citizens of an Afghan state that have limited histories with the institutionalising of modern technologies of governance.²⁴ This leaves many people with limited options. Although some Afghans obtained passports prior to the Fall of Kabul, others did not. This may seem curious to some, but Ghulam Faizi, a former interpreter for the Canadian military in Afghanistan, provides one of the many possible reasons. While testifying during a meeting at the House of Commons' special committee on Afghanistan in April 2022, Faizi explained: "many [of those who assisted the Government of Canada] weren't able to complete the process before the Taliban's return... they were told by IRCC agents they didn't need to worry about that because their family members wouldn't need passports."²⁵ Seeking documentation now, through Afghan-state channels, would expose the names

and addresses of applicants' family members to the Taliban, a potentially fatal risk for many groups targeted for revenge killings.²⁶ And, even with valid documentation, some countries nevertheless deny resettlement, or even passage across their borders, to Afghans fleeing their homes, citing reasons that range from managing overcapacity to ensuring state security.²⁷ For instance, officials in neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Iran and Uzbekistan require refugees arriving at their borders to stay in camps until they can return to Afghanistan or find a durable solution in a third country.²⁸ Other countries in Europe like Austria, Hungary, Poland and Switzerland fortified their border security upon news of the most recent wave of mass displacement, stating that they will not admit any Afghans into their country. Meanwhile, NATO countries that were more directly involved in the War in Afghanistan, like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada made varying pledges to resettle a limited number of refugees, but some scholars have noted that their pathways have been restrictive and unaccommodating.²⁹

Indeed, the regional and international barriers working against Afghan peoples place them in a dire predicament where the choice to remain in Afghanistan carries great risk but so does the precarious journey abroad. This seems to reflect Walia's assertion that restrictive immigration policies are not only parallel to but a fulcrum between domestic and global warfare and violence.³⁰ Canefe raises similar points in her descriptions of international border regimes and their reliance on governance strategies of containment and repression.³¹ She notes how such strategies often put the onus on refugees for failing to secure their own survival, even amidst their everyday experiences of violence, precarity and persecution. Such failures tend to be "presented as the responsibility and ultimately the fault of the individual, not of the state, nor of a particular political/economic/social system that produced the conditions framing the lives of the dispossessed as excess".³² Similarly, Walia contends that condemning refugees and asylum-seekers for undertaking treacherous journeys for survival exonerates the willful and systemic efforts in making both their home countries and their journeys to new countries unsafe. Indeed, just as someone does not simply lose their home and livelihood, "migrants and refugees don't just appear at our borders; they are produced by systemic forces".³³ By making individual choices of peoples occupying highly precarious subject positions, or by framing the fatal outcomes caused by these structures, with passive terminology like "border deaths", the violent warscape of premeditated fatalities remain obscured.³⁴ In addition to disavowing the systemic factors underpinning such violence, the deaths of refugees reify and legitimate a doctrine of deterrence predicated on instilling fear and preventing migration. However, Walia notes that the restrictive border policies, guided by this doctrine of deterrence, compel irregular migration rather than deterring it, making death the evermore common outcome.

Canada's Response

When assessing Canada's potential role within international border regimes, we can look at its Afghan resettlement programmes as one entry-point for

inquiry, using the CUAET as a point of comparison. The nature of these programmes and their eligibility requirements differ significantly. The CUAET is regarded as a temporary residence pathway, not a refugee stream.³⁵ Unlike the resettlement pathways for Afghan refugees, the CUAET does not have a cap on the number of visas it can issue, including those for work and study. Immigration Minister Sean Fraser explained these different approaches by claiming that Ukrainians only want to stay in Canada temporarily, not as refugees.³⁶ However, the programme nevertheless provides Ukrainians the choice to opt for permanent residence once they arrive in the country and grants government supports for this decision through state-funded services: "Ukrainians and their family members working and studying in Canada will be able to gain valuable Canadian work or education experience to help set them up for future success should they eventually choose to seek permanent residency through IRCC's immigration programmes and streams".³⁷ Thus, although formally stated as a temporary visa programme, the CUAET serves as an open pathway towards permanent residence as well, if Ukrainians so choose. These special measures are not afforded to Afghan nationals or their family members, and many claimants are not granted priority processing unless they have direct family members who have recently resettled in Canada as refugees.

The family reunification efforts for the programmes differ as well. Under the CUAET, any Ukrainian national and their family members are eligible to apply. This even includes family members who are not Ukrainian by nationality. The criteria for family members include a spouse or common-law partner, dependent children (including a spouse's or common-law partner's children), and/or grandchildren. In contrast, Canada does not have a single unified programme for Afghan nationals. Rather, their pathways are spread across smaller and more specialised programmes with varying degrees of restrictions on eligibility based on age, marital status, location and date of displacement. For instance, under the "Immigration programme for Afghans who assisted the Government of Canada", eligibility requires Afghan nationals to prove "a significant and/or enduring relationship with the Government of Canada".³⁸ Additionally, the IRCC limits the criteria for eligible 'family members' in such cases. Unlike the CUAET, it does not include the dependent children of a spouse or common-law partner if they are not also the dependent children of the primary applicant. It also excludes dependent children and grandchildren who are over the age of 22, or if these dependents are married or in common-law partnerships.³⁹

The IRCC also restricts applicants or their family members from applying under this stream if they left Afghanistan before July 22, 2021. These added restrictions increase the likelihood of changes to the family structures of Afghan nationals as they go through the process of resettlement.

Those who did not assist the government during the war can apply through the adjacent humanitarian programme. These applicants must belong to a humanitarian group such as women leaders, human rights defenders, persecuted religious or ethnic minorities, LGBTI individuals, or journalists who aided Canadian journalists. The programme requires them to be both

outside of Afghanistan when they apply and without durable solution in a third country. It is important to note that there is no direct way to apply through this programme. Applicants must first register for refugee status with either the UNHCR or the government of the country in which they currently reside. The programme is also restricted to applicants only and does not include family members. Family members must apply through a standard application process but may be eligible for 'special measures' designed for 'family reunification'. However, the criteria for 'family members' are more limited in these cases than they are for Afghan nationals who assisted Canada, let alone Ukrainians processed through the CUAET. Unlike the latter, these measures do not include grandchildren or the children of a spouse or common law partner. This provides some interesting insight into the ways citizenship is taken up by the state in matters of displacement. It seems that Canada grants greater benefits to the family members of Ukrainian citizens, regardless of their nationality, than it does for the family members of Canadian citizens when they are Afghan nationals. While non-Ukrainian family members of Ukrainian citizens receive fast-tracked pathways to Canada, the Afghan family members of Canadian citizens must apply for temporary residence or private sponsorship in order to receive, what the state refers to as 'priority processing'.⁴⁰ The permanent residence applications of the Afghan family members of Canadian citizens do not receive this privilege. Afghan nationals who are not applying through these special measures can ask for temporary residence, but their applications will not be fast-tracked, as it is done for Ukrainians; only those applying through the refugee immigration stream of permanent residence will be prioritised.

However, even among the many different combinations of pathways for Afghans that grant 'priority processing', reports indicate that these cases can still take up to several months to receive final approval.⁴¹ This holds true not only for those awaiting approval both in and outside Afghanistan, but also for those already approved and awaiting clearance to travel to Canada from a safe third country. Such lengthy wait-times in asylum are not uncommon to Canada. In a 2017 memo, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada estimated that wait-times for asylum claims could take up to 11 years by 2021, which some argue is closer to the realities faced by refugees than the projected 24-month period indicated on the Board's website.⁴² For those inside the country, the wait-times can prove fatal.

Various news media reports reveal that many of those who aided Canada's military and diplomatic mission in Afghanistan have been detained and tortured by the Taliban and subjected to revenge-killings.⁴³ Canada publicly condemned the Taliban's actions,⁴⁴ but questions still remain about its complicity in enabling such violence at a systemic level. The cause for such grievances is especially evident when looking at the early requirements in the special programme for Afghan nationals who assisted Canada, which was launched back in July 2021 after persistent pressures from advocacy groups made up of war veterans, active military members, supporters and the Afghan diaspora living in Canada.⁴⁵ The initial application entailed 19-pages of English-only instructions that read:

Starting from the date of this message, you have three days (72 hours) to send your completed application package to [the immigration email account]...If you do not provide a completed application package within the next three days, we will conclude that you are not interested in participating in this Public Policy.⁴⁶

Although fulfilling such requirements may be possible for some of the interpreters and diplomats who are fluent in English, it would be nearly impossible for others like cooks, drivers, cleaners, security guards or electricians, who would be eligible under the programme but would not have enough fluency in the language or technology to apply. Retired lieutenant, Dave Morrow, added that even with the help of volunteers, the time restraints would leave many applications unfinished.⁴⁷

After pressures from advocate groups and activists, the IRCC soon repealed the 72-hour limit and placed additional 'special measures' for Afghan applications to facilitate faster processing. In response to questions regarding the initial time restraints, Immigration Minister Marco Mendicino explained, "The requested response time is a reflection of the urgency on the ground to get as many applications as possible as quickly as possible so that we can get people to safety...[and that] applications received outside of that window will still be processed."⁴⁸ Notwithstanding that such strategies of urgency were never employed in the CUAET, the processing of Ukrainian applications were and still are much more efficient and accessible than those designed for Afghan resettlement. This raises important concerns regarding the state decisions underpinning policies that lead to long application wait-times for some groups and not others.

One answer can perhaps be found in what Nobe-Ghelani and Ngo refer to as 'refugeeness'—an identity construction in which international, national and local politics, as well as different forms of knowledge, coincide to construct a subject position that flattens the multiplicities of individuals' lives and experiences.⁴⁹ It casts refugees as people devoid of agency and in need of outsiders to care for them. As Hyndman illustrates, they are regarded as 'messy' and in need of ordering, which the UNHCR undertakes through an endless "exercise of counting, calculating and coding refugees".⁵⁰ The need to discipline refugees in such ways influences the design and operation of their resettlement processes whereby their safety, livelihood and legal rights, as a result, are often compromised and violated.⁵¹ Such practices are not only seen in the processing of Afghan refugee claimants, but they may also reflect what Mbembe understands as necropower in its benevolent form whereby the subjugation of a racialised peoples is carried out to save them from themselves. In contrast, the state's decision to refer to the CUAET as an emergency temporary residence programme and not a "refugee stream" seems to discursively reflect the state's recognition of Ukrainian rights to livelihood and safety by allowing them to bypass the normative structure of the international refugee regime and expediting their pathway out of displacement. As Canefe explains, this normative structure:

dictates that the applicant's subjective assessment of risk must be part of both the procedure and the final decision; this procedural requirement stems from the legal definition of a refugee. Then there is the triage—like calculation of internal protection/relocation/flight and the determination of which one is most likely to be applicable in a given case.⁵²

As such, the state does not confer refugeehood upon Ukrainian subjectivity, as Nobe-Ghelani and Ngo term, nor does it confer upon them the status of the living-dead, as Mbembe identifies. Thus, the living conditions that they experience in their attempts to cross the Canadian border seem contingent upon their subjectification through the recognitive mechanisms of the legal-administrative apparatuses of the states involved. As Ali reveals, "...to cross any border at all means to submit one's own body to the law. The law marks the body, documents it, scrutinises it, registers it, permits it, manipulates it, suppresses it, denies it, forbids it, kills it."⁵³

However, if we are to consider the operations of necropower as a possibility in the state's legal-administrative approach towards Afghan displacement, then it may be appropriate to examine the judicial grounds that provide its sovereign right to determine who may live and who is left to die. At the federal level, the Constitution Act (1867) provides the state with the authority over immigration status and "aliens".⁵⁴ Common law courts assert that "no alien has any right to enter this country except by leave of the Crown . . . [and] he has no right whatever to remain".⁵⁵ Citing Section 19(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), Bhatia highlights how individuals require legal authorisation to enter or stay in Canada, with the exception of citizens, registered Indians and permanent residents. He goes on to explain how Canada's current 177-page immigration statute sits in stark contrast to the 15-page Immigration Act of 1869 where the state administered open-door policies, emigrants' rights, the active recruitment of settlers and grants of free land for homesteading. However, as Bhatia indicates elsewhere, this was not the case for all peoples.⁵⁶ Many racialised groups were permitted entry only on special circumstances like the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which saw the influx of over 17,000 Chinese railroad workers between 1881 and 1885. Upon completion of the Railway, the state issued head taxes on new Chinese immigrants, and often deported those who already arrived, as their labour was no longer needed.

As Bhatia illustrates, "racist selectivity and exclusionary immigration law to follow only took place *after* completion of massive European migration."⁵⁷ Today, cataloguing exclusion and limiting the means of entry rather than facilitating mass immigration and displacement characterises the current statute.⁵⁸ Yet the racial logic of Canadian judicial practices seems to remain as a persistent feature of the state's legal administration of immigration and refugee proceedings, especially when considering the unprecedented exemptions made in the CUAET. The fast-tracked and mass scale issuing of visas for the displaced peoples from Ukraine reflects the historical pattern of

Canadian immigration laws permitting mass migration from Europe while restricting and confining those from the Global South.

The discretionary power of the state to suppress and/or rescind authorisation for racialised subjectivities after granting it, also seems to be a historical trend that persists in Canada's current refugee immigration processes. Jawed Haqmal provides one case in point.⁵⁹ Along with his family, Haqmal, a former translator who worked for the Canadian military in Afghanistan, received the IRCC's approval to resettle in Canada. Without any safe pathways directly to the country, they soon fled the Taliban-occupied Afghanistan in August in search of a safe third country. Their lives ensued with uncertainty and precarity as they struggled to find shelter in other states but encountered restrictive immigration policies instead. They first found temporary asylum in Ukraine and then Poland, before reaching Germany where, as of April of 2022, they still await word from Ottawa to finally resettle in Canada. However, after an interview with an IRCC officer at the local Canadian embassy, his family's case was put on hold for additional security screenings. Haqmal's case represents just one of many, where Afghan citizens await resettlement in third countries.⁶⁰ Aidan Strickland, a spokesperson for Immigration Minister Sean Fraser, said that these cases will receive authorisation only when they complete full admissibility assessments, including security screenings. As wait-times drag on for months on end, many find themselves faced with further challenges as their visas and permits expire.⁶¹ This leaves the immigration status and eligibility for public services of many Afghans in third countries at risk.

Giannacopoulos, Marmo, and de Lint help elaborate on the racial logic underpinning such discursive uses of security in resettlement processes. They argue that the migration or refugee 'problem' is often presented as an issue of numbers and people, producing reactive policies developed around highly visible cases, rather than assessments based on systemic causes.⁶² This reflects much of the Canadian narratives surrounding Afghan displacement and the need for additional security screenings in its cases and the lack thereof for its European counterparts. In another study, Giannacopoulos and de Lint add that alongside the discourses of security, the state discursively operationalises humanitarianism and economic development in ways that simultaneously limit its accountability to the issues of displacement and represent their decision to do so as 'reasonable'.⁶³ In the interaction between these discursive regimes, security becomes the limit to the humanitarian impulse, and economic identity becomes the threshold to development. This can be readily seen in the cases for Afghan resettlement and in those under the CUAET. For Afghans, the state is able to exercise its sovereign right to exclude, based on questions of security, presenting its restrictive border policies as 'reasonable' and setting limits to its humanitarian impulse. For Ukrainians, it provides the basis for exceptions in policy and the legal-administration of additional supports like the waiving of COVID-19 vaccination requirements or free visitor visas that grant work, study and stay in Canada for up to three years, as opposed to the standard six-month authorised stay for regular visitors.⁶⁴

Such disparities in the provisioning of humanitarian supports are indicative of the high degree of flexibility in Canada's state practices and policies that the politics of humanitarianism allows. As Dauvergne elucidates, "humanitarianism is not a standard of obligation, as justice would be, but rather of charity. [It] defines us as good when we are able to meet the standard, and justifiable when we are not"⁶⁵. Nobe-Ghelani and Ngo agree, adding that it both bolsters the nation-building agenda and reaffirms its polity as good moral citizens through the process of racialised Othering.⁶⁶ Thus, we can understand the state's flexible use of humanitarianism alongside its racialised discourses of security as functions for its disavowal of complicity in the reproduction of Afghan displacement and precarity. In this interplay between humanitarianism and security, what emerges is a technology of control over the racialised Afghan body. Here, the refugee subject is constructed as helpless and in need of state protections from the very "like-death" conditions in which the state plays a significant role in making possible through its governance strategies of containment and repression. However, the continued disavowal of this complicity helps ensure that the enunciation of solutions to Afghan displacement remains implicitly coded in a racial logic, thereby increasing the likelihood that any tangible progress remains limited and incremental. This seems to suggest the need for a more concerted effort in disrupting the state's discursive power over racialising its standards of "obligation" and "threat".

Afghan Futurities and Struggles for Life

By reading the Canadian response through the lens of necropolitics, we can see how a nexus of security and humanitarianism serves as a source of sovereign power for the state. As Mbembe explains: "the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die... To exercise sovereignty, then, is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power."⁶⁷ Through such expressions of sovereignty, the modern nation-state's "colonial violence and occupation are profoundly underwritten by the sacred terror of truth and exclusivity".⁶⁸ It is in such conditions where refugees may experience life as the 'living-dead' in necropolitical zones that render them as 'disposable' for indeterminate lengths of time at the discretion of the state.

The prevalence of necropolitics in Canada's approach to Afghan displacement does not necessarily mean that resistance and change is bleak or futile. Quite to the contrary, as this study has demonstrated, tangible gains have been made, some of which occurred within state institutional channels like the pressures from advocate groups that resulted in increased accessibility and relatively more lenient parameters within resettlement programmes. What a cognizance of the state's use of necropower does reveal, however, is how its border regime persists in the subjugation of Afghan life to the power of death. It illustrates the ways that the state deeply reconfigures "the relations between resistance, sacrifice, and terror".⁶⁹

Indeed, the necropower of state sovereignty shapes the very ways in which Afghans enunciate their struggles for survival. Gilberto Rosas' notion of necro-subjection helps to elucidate this point.⁷⁰ The concept illustrates how refugees "must make themselves dead in order to live".⁷¹ They often rely on advocates, allies or experts in asylum and refugee immigration proceedings to "cast their homelands as [so] hopeless, full of despair, and dominated by monstrous and imminent racialised and gendered oppression and violence...[that] the judge finds in favour of their application".⁷² Such insight provides caution to those pursuing incremental gains through the state's legal and institutional channels. This is not to say that such pursuits should not be undertaken. Rather, it reminds us to be cognisant of the ways we may be incentivised to represent Afghan homelands and cultures as death-worlds in our support for Afghan survival while simultaneously pairing such depictions with those of Canada and Western culture as a place of life. Such representations and dichotomies carry significant implications for the everyday lives of peoples in a world dominated by international border regimes.

For the many who are subjected to 'refugeeness', survival often becomes contingent upon the successful performances of necro-subjection, negotiating life in a caesura between the worthy and unworthy. Reports and statements regarding torture, revenge-killings, and gendered violence are filtered through legal proceedings in ways that reify depictions of a civilised West by spatialising death beyond its borders and embodying it within the racialised subjects that are displaced from such places. Indeed, the terrors of everyday violence facing the displaced are managed and circumscribed through state discourses that reproduce the image of Afghan death-worlds while disavowing Western complicity in its reproduction. As a result, the subjectivity of Afghan nationals, as entities of these death-worlds, is often instrumentalised into dangerous enemies that threaten the security of the nation-state and its polity of good moral citizens. Foucault describes this process as the "liberal art of government" where security and freedom intertwine to produce life for some while denying it to the racialised others.⁷³ There is no liberalism without a culture of danger. Adapting Foucault's arguments into the contemporary issues of forced displacement, Perera and Pugliese help us to anchor our understanding of the regimes of liberal governance and how they employ state practices and policies that "biopolitically dispatch refugees and asylum seekers beyond the category of the 'human', relegating them to offshore gulags where they have been left to languish and die".⁷⁴ Thus, from the discourses of security to those of humanitarianism, we can see how the state's modern liberal principles are imbued with a 'culture of danger' to re-establish a racial logic that underpins the judicial grounds for its expressions of sovereignty. Understanding the necropolitical inner-workings of the state's approach towards racialised migration, then, can perhaps inform the ways in which we contest the state's restrictive practices within its legal-administrative apparatus. Indeed, a cognizance of the state's use of the power of death in concrete and tangible

ways may allow for a more concerted effort in championing for Afghan life and survival.

Notes

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⁶Nivi Manchanda, *Imagining Afghanistan: The History and Politics of Imperial Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Gregory Albo and Jerome Klassen, eds., *Empire's Ally: Canada and the War in Afghanistan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

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Misogynist Norms and Women's Resistance Movements in Afghanistan

By

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The comeback of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021 affected the lives of women tremendously. When they came back to power, they started imposing the patriarchal and gender-biased norms over women, making their lives miserable. Restrictions over women became stricter and they were hardly given any chance to lead their lives in their own way. The gender activists across the world have condemned the gender-restrictive policies of the Taliban. This chapter will explore the nature of the misogynist norms governing the Afghan society and how the women resistance movement against women exploitation has gained momentum.

Consolidation of Taliban Rule in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is located in south-central part of Asia. Its location in between the south and central Asia has huge significance. It is a land-locked country sharing borders with Iran in the west, Pakistan in the east, China in the north-east and the Central Asian republics like Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan in the north-west. As the Central Asian countries are rich in oil and natural gas, Afghanistan acts as a bridge between the Central Asian countries and the South Asian countries keen to secure their energy supply. Afghanistan was a monarchy under the rule of Muhammad Zahir Shah. As the Cold War started, Asia became the centre of attraction for the superpowers to expand their sphere of influence. United States tried to enter into military alliances with the Asian powers to make them a part of its bloc. As Pakistan signed the military pact with United States, Afghanistan was drawn towards the Soviet Union. Zahir Shah intended to make a constitution in 1964 and he formed Loya Girja with the tribal leaders to debate and discuss about different issues and to give shape to the constitution. Shah even allowed the political parties to operate

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but they were not given the liberty to contest in the elections. Soon the power and position of Shah were seized by his cousin Daoud Khan in a coup in 1973. Daoud formed an alliance with the Parcham faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). After the PDPA got reunited, it conducted a coup against Daoud and consolidated its power. The repression of Afghan Marxists by the Daoud government had provoked the coup.

Soon, the PDPA government under the leadership of Khalq, generated terror among the population, especially, among the ethnic minorities as he tried to implement land reform measures in the rural areas through repressive means. Religious leaders, students, teachers and political leaders were targeted. The forceful land reform policies accompanied by mass repression sparked uprisings across the country. The policies manifested revengeful intentions. As in the past century, the Pashtuns used to encroach upon the Hazara, Uzbeks and Tajiks, similarly, the Khalq government attempted to reverse the process. Clashes between the government forces and the local communities became frequent. With the help of Russia, the government tried to suppress the uprising. After the Soviet intelligence forces took control, the Khalq President Hafizullah Amin was assassinated and Barbak Kamal came to power. Through mass arrest, forceful detentions, tortures, executions and aerial bombardments, the government tried to curb the movement. The Islamist organisation was the base of the resistance movement. Due to government repression, they formed their bases in Pakistan and Iran. The Mujahideen evolved as a coalition of Islamist tribal groups fighting against the Soviet Union. They got support from other countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United States. As radical Muslims from other Islamic countries started joining the resistance movement, it became intense.

In 1988, the Geneva Accord took shape to solve the Afghan crisis. The Soviets agreed to withdraw their troops. The Soviet troops were withdrawn within February 1989. The Islamic guerrilla targeted the Soviet-backed government under President Najibullah. In early 1992, the combined forces of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the commander of the Mujahideen and Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, head of Uzbek militia formed the Northern Alliance. As Kabul was attacked, the situation became tense. Burhanuddin Rabbani, the leader of Jamiat-i-Islami, an organisation of Sunni Muslim Tajiks, formed the interim government. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar founded Hezb-i-Islami, a radical Sunni group and joined hands with Dostum to oust Rabbani, leading to a full-scale civil war in the country in early 1994. Chaos reigned all over the country, turmoil prevailed everywhere.

In the midst of this the Taliban emerged. The leadership was provided by Mullah Mohammad Omar. Mullah's parents were of Pashtun origin. He became a Muslim leader and established a madrasah. He belonged to a family of landless labour, so he started consolidating the Taliban against the exploitative, greedy and power-mongering warlords. He started preaching his ideas to inspire people by quoting lines from the Quran.¹ The Taliban followed the extremist interpretation of Deobandism, a branch of Sunni Islam. Deobandism emerged during British colonial rule in India as an anti-

colonial movement to regenerate Islam. It preaches a rigid, stringent version of Islam. Deobandism spread widely in Pakistan.² Pakistani Deobandis had even set up a political party named Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) in 1945. JUI set up madrasahs in the Pashtun belt of Pakistan to provide education, shelter, food and military training. When Benazir Bhutto became the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1993, the JUI was a coalition partner. The JUI used to train the Taliban. They wanted to restore Islamic laws in Afghanistan. The Taliban ideology was a mixture of Pashtunwali, Deobandi and Saudi-influenced Islam.³ The Taliban and JUI were funded by the Saudi Wahabbis. The Taliban also got support from Pakistani ISI as Pakistan realised that through them, it could secure a trade route to Central Asia. The Taliban got control over the border regions with the Central Asian republics. They were against Shia Muslims. During the Afghan civil war, Iran had supported the Shi'ite Hazaras. With the increasing strength of the Taliban, particularly over Central Asia, the Shi'ite regime in Iran felt threatened. Although Afghanistan was a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country, the societal diversity was destroyed by the Taliban. The first major victory of the Taliban was the capture of Spin Boldak, a town in southern Afghanistan, in October 1994, followed by the capture of Kandahar in the subsequent month. In September 1996, the Taliban captured Kabul and Massoud was removed from power. They started imposing Islamic laws in the regions they had captured and tried to control the civil war.

By early November 1994, they had taken over Kandahar and had also got hold of weapons, military vehicles, tanks, etc. Their next target was to get control over the Quetta-Ashgabat Highway by the end of 1994 so that they could collect the one-time toll from the trucks carrying raw cotton from Turkmenistan to Quetta. After achieving victory in the north, the Taliban, in February 1995, moved towards the north-western region of Herat inhabited by the ethnic Tajiks and Persian-speaking people. Taliban's next target was to capture Kabul. Taliban's initial attempts to capture Kabul were unsuccessful. The members of the Taliban had different views with regard to the seizure of the city. The comparatively moderate faction among the Taliban were of the view that as the initial attempts had failed, they should try to negotiate a peace agreement with the government of Kabul. But the conservative section stressed that the attempts to capture the city must continue. The Taliban used to consider Mullah Omar as the second caliph of Sunni Islam after Prophet Muhammad. Finally, in late September 1996, after trying for 18 months, the Taliban captured Kabul and hanged the former Afghan President Muhammad Najibullah. Another significant achievement of the Taliban was the control of Mazar-e-Sharif. Though Mazar-e-Sharif is a multi-ethnic region, it was under the governance of ethnic Uzbek Afghan warlord, General Rashid Dostum. He successfully handled the governance by maintaining a liberal environment and ensuring peace and stability. As the tomb of Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam, is situated at Mazar-e-Sharif, it is a place of religious interest for Shi'ite pilgrims. On the other hand, the city of Balkh, near Mazar-e-Sharif is a holy place for the Zoroastrians, as Zoroaster, the founder of Zoroastrianism used to live there. In May 1997, the Taliban captured different areas of Mazar-e-Sharif, especially the mosques, and destroyed the liberal environment by imposing

their fundamentalist laws. But as the Taliban had meagre knowledge of the topography of the Mazar-e-Sharif and Balkh, they had to face defeat. The warlords also fought hard to restrict the expansion of the Taliban in the region. This has been one of the most significant defeats of the Taliban.

Throughout 1997, Afghanistan had remained war ravaged and a significant portion of the territory went under the control of the Taliban. Among the notable regions that the Taliban targeted, one of them is Bamiyan, a region having Hazara population where the majority are Shiites. The Taliban targeted that region because of the religious affiliation of the majority of the population; also, the region enabled a liberal environment for women's progress which is against the paternalistic norms of the Taliban. Apart from that, Bamiyan had a centre for Buddhist religion and culture which prompted them to capture the region to impose Islamic laws. The Taliban made a strategy to impose a blockade over the Bamiyan region by obstructing all the ways connecting Bamiyan. This disrupted food supply to the region and people faced catastrophic food shortage. Even the United Nations, being considered as a puppet of the liberal western culture, was not allowed to conduct relief works. The Taliban conducted massacre in Mazar-e-Sharif and killed many innocent Hazara Shiites. The massacre was condemned by Iran, and many Iranian diplomats, working in the Iranian Consulate at Mazar-e-Sharif, were killed.

Women under Misogynist Taliban Rule

Since the 1980s, there has been a massive shift in global politics. A pan-Islamic culture challenging the western liberal culture had started expanding its tentacles by establishing control over the state. Islamic fundamentalism had started infiltrating to consolidate its base. By imposing a specific value system and advocating culture-specific ways of life, fundamentalism tried to control public culture. Under the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, women were kept aloof from public life, so their lives were confined within a private sphere. The Taliban used to control each and every aspect of public and private conduct. Men were not allowed to shave their beards or cut hair in western style. Kite flying and training pigeons were forbidden. As the Taliban was against western culture, western music or drums were restricted. Playing in shops, cars and hotels was forbidden.⁴ By imposing the Sharia laws in Afghanistan, the Taliban tried to control women's lives. They considered themselves as the guardian of Sharia law and thus legitimised their rule. Women had to abide by the purdah system. They had to maintain the dictated dress code and had to keep themselves behind veils to protect themselves from the male gaze. Their veiled existence was normalised.

Soon after the Taliban consolidated their power, they restricted women from having education. They closed girls' schools and women were barred from educational rights. Depriving girls from going to school also made them vulnerable to child marriage. Women were not allowed to work outside. They were also deprived of their 'Right to Work' and to lead an independent life. Earning one's own livelihood and becoming financially

independent are the avenues of women's liberty. But unfortunately, all were very unjustly closed. Women had to depend on the male member of the family for their livelihood. The Pashtun customary law and the strict Sharia laws were forcefully imposed on them. They were not even allowed to go out of the house without any *mahram* (male guardian). Women were not allowed to choose their own partners or express their consent. The society was configured to legitimise the suppression of women. Women had to lead their lives in an extremely undemocratic, authoritarian and patriarchal environment, where the religious scriptures were used to legitimise the androcentric norms. Juan R.I. Cole in "The Taliban, Women and the Hegelian Private Sphere" has depicted an experience of a woman named Latifa where she had witnessed a group of women in veils being beaten in street for wearing white socks. As the flag of Afghanistan has white colour in it, the Taliban considered it as being disrespectful towards the national flag.⁵ If women were found to be disobeying the rules dictated by the Taliban, they were subjected to brutal punishment. This was the manifestation of state-controlled public power.

In such a coercive environment, domestic violence, physical and mental abuse of women became normal. Women's lives were confined to homes doing household activities, taking care of their husband and rearing children. Gender stereotypes were coercively imposed on women. Any attempts to break the stereotype resulted in harsh punishment. The male members of the family often committed honour crimes to cleanse the honour of the family. In a report of the United Nations, a drug-addicted husband in Pulk-e-Charki prison was interviewed on December 2006; he had tried to force his wife into prostitution to finance his addiction.⁶ Rape and sexual abuse were hardly reported due to social taboos and shame. In the patriarchal society, husbands often forced young wives to provide sexual services. Women were often coerced to marry the person who has raped her or her abductor, in case she was abducted. Instances of forced marriage also involved forcing a widow to marry the brother or cousin of her dead husband. Women were even imprisoned for running away from home. All the roads of running away from the strict and unjust rules were closed. If any family provided asylum to any woman who had run away, the family was considered as the kidnapper and was subjected to punishment.⁷ Women were not allowed to be treated by male doctors, so women's access to adequate health care was also restricted. Only some female doctors and nurses were allowed to practice in a few hospitals.⁸ Male tailors were forbidden to make women's clothes. Women were not allowed to wash clothes on the banks of the river without a male guardian. Men and women were not allowed to dance together in wedding ceremonies.⁹ Women hardly had any liberty under Taliban rule. Women's lives were confined within the private sphere. Public engagements were strictly prohibited. Women were deprived of basic human rights.

Few organisations working with women's rights came up in the 1970s. Revolutionary Afghan Women Association (RAWA) was founded in 1977 to promote the oppressed voices of women, making effort to establish peace and a democratic environment. As during the civil war, many male members of the family lost their lives, women had no option left but to earn

their livelihoods to survive in spite of the Taliban's threats to the women to stay indoors. Few women's organisations were active even before the rise of the Taliban. The Women's Traditional Training Centre used to provide women training in foreign language courses and imparted computer skills. In rural areas also, they worked to make women self-dependent by providing training in handicrafts, bee-keeping, animal husbandry, etc. The Taliban rule tried to destroy these organisations, so they went underground. Women teachers and doctors were threatened to give up their professions. Afghan Women's Network (AWN), founded in 1995, faced severe threats from the Taliban. These organisations provided an impetus to women to protest against their exclusion from society and the workforce.¹⁰ Human rights organisations like SAVE (Sister against Violent Extremism) tried to empower women. It drew attention to the value of women. Thus, resistance has been growing against the gender-biased norms governing the Afghan society.

Symbolising Women and Campaign against Taliban

The incident of 9/11 had shaken the entire world. It was a serious threat to the security of America. President George W. Bush declared War on Terror. It became an important agenda of the US foreign policy to eliminate terrorism. It aimed at crippling terrorist organisations by attacking them and taking strict steps against the nations that support, sponsor and harbour terrorist activities. As a part of the Global War on Terror campaign, the United States conducted Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. The United States was engaged in a ground operation against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. CENTCOM (US Central Command) was in charge of the operation. The combat and humanitarian operations were conducted simultaneously. The United States also justified the campaign as one to establish democracy and individual rights. In the month of October 2001, the US conducted air strikes targeting the air forces, communications, air defence weapons, leadership, barracks, etc. The US adopted a strategy of supporting the indigenous anti-Taliban forces. CIA developed a bond with the warlords to strengthen the anti-Taliban forces. Uprooting Taliban from Mazar-e-Sharif, mainly inhabited by Hazaras and Uzbeks, was the first major victory of US-led forces. The Northern Alliance Forces with US support conducted operations in Mazar-e-Sharif. The US intensified its air strikes in October-November. Cluster bombs were dropped by B-52 bombers. Air force B-1, B-52 bombers, laser-guided bombs, navy-fighter bombers, etc. were used. Abdul Rashid Dostum fought to topple the Taliban. The missions conducted by the Army's Special Forces were incredible. The collaboration of the Special Forces with the indigenous forces had strengthened the anti-Taliban forces. The Afghan opposition forces in Germany decided to put Hamid Karzai as the leader of the interim government. The Taliban surrendered and many Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders fled the country. Omar escaped to Pakistan.

The US State Department came up with a report depicting the deplorable condition of women in Afghanistan. There were cases of gross human rights violations. After the Taliban had captured Herat, many girls had

been thrown out of school; when Kabul had been captured in 1996, there had been many cases of human rights violations.¹¹ Even after the fall of the Taliban, when the warlords were keen to establish their control over the territory, there were cases of gang rapes. Though through her speech in 2002, Laura Bush promised to protect the Afghans from human rights abuses, the US allies, who helped Afghanistan to topple the Taliban, practiced women repression.¹² The US failed to curb the power of the warlords. Afghan women addressed the matter of educational needs and marched to demand the reopening of schools by March 2002, and also demanded disarmament, demining of Afghanistan, reconstruction of the schools which got damaged by war, and provision of shelter to the children who got orphaned due to the war.¹³ The Afghan women delegates demanded to eliminate the warlords from the political process of Afghanistan and women activists campaigned to restore women rights and dignity. Women were used as symbols by both the Taliban and the US. By establishing strict control over the women, the Taliban had wanted to idolise their ideal society whereas the US later wanted to project itself as being the liberator of women from the gender repressive environment by using the Afghan women as a symbol to legitimise their bombing campaign. The image of an Afghan woman fully veiled, deprived of educational rights and employment opportunities and denied of basic liberty was used as a symbol by the US government to conduct its campaign against the Taliban regime. By publicising themselves as promoters of democracy and protectors of human rights, and the opponents as authoritarians upholding gender-restrictive norms, the US legitimised their campaign in Afghanistan. The United Nations in November 2001, in the conference in Bonn, Germany, decided to form a transitional government in Afghanistan. The agreement brought different factions of Afghans under the auspices of the UN to work together for the rebuilding of the nation. Nation-building efforts aimed at establishing sustainable peace.

Women in the Post-Taliban Phase

After the toppling of the Taliban, the Northern Alliance with the help of the US planned to restructure Afghanistan. As women's issues were an important part of the agenda of the anti-Taliban operation, Hamid Karzai in 2002 formed the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Sima Samar was made the head of the ministry and was entrusted with the duty of organising the activities of the ministry. Sohaila Siddiq was a reputed surgeon; he was made the Minister of Public Health. Women were also allowed to represent in Emergency Loya Jirgah (ELJ).¹⁴ About 180 women were elected. In Constitutional Loya Jirgah (CLJ), women representatives were also there. Karzai also spoke publicly for the human rights of women. Though women were placed in important positions of state power, domestic violence and sexual harassment cases were still rampant. Afghanistan signed the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2003. In the Presidential election of 2004, many women candidates faced death threats; hence, many women election workers withdrew themselves from electoral activities. Though the

number of female parliamentarians was few, they spoke for women's rights. Malalai Joya, the youngest Parliamentarian of Afghanistan, condemned the warlords and the Islamic fundamentalists in ELJ and CLJ for human right abuse. Malalai Joya was expelled from the Parliament in 2007 because she denounced incumbent corrupt warlords. She compared the Jihadi household to an animal stable, as she claimed that women's status had been reduced to that of an animal. She had also faced death threats and assassination attempts by the Taliban.¹⁵ As the Islamic fundamentalists were against women's liberty, they started harassing women in public streets by using derogatory comments, abusive language and even by acid attacks. On November 12, 2008, two female students of Mirwais High School were attacked by two men on motorcycles in Qandahar, throwing acid on their faces.¹⁶ They were hospitalised with serious burns.

A girl named Shamsia was also attacked; she said, "My life and my family were under attack. After my face was burnt with acid, I went back to school but a man threatened me again. With the fall of the Taliban, the women organisations whose activities were suppressed became active again. We all ran away; my family is split in different locations." Though Hamid Karzai promised her to provide security to her family, it never materialised.¹⁷ The security of women was under serious threat. Security was essential for reconstruction efforts and peacebuilding. Women were still banned from singing in the radio, as was the picturing of films with women in scanty clothes. The issues of repression, exploitation, economic marginalisation and political silencing were addressed. Women groups tried to reach women. Mozhdah Jamalzadah,¹⁸ an Afghan-born singer, through her songs, wanted to make women aware of their rights, and praised the opening up of Afghan society.¹⁹ The condition of widows was miserable. They entered the workforce for their livelihood. Many were employed as domestic help, farm labour and were self-employed as tailors and weavers. The female children of the widows were the worst sufferers as they could hardly afford educational facilities and had to work to support their families. They were in the most vulnerable situation, often forced into marriage, trafficking and prostitution.²⁰

The Comeback of the Taliban

After the surrender of the Taliban, by 2005, they were planning to consolidate themselves in the southern and eastern parts of the country. In 2006, frequent clashes between the US and the Taliban troops were reported. As by 2009, the Taliban enhanced their presence in the north, the US increased counterinsurgency efforts. Though the US deployments had reduced the presence of the Taliban, they could not eliminate them altogether. The Obama administration changed its strategy to deal with the Taliban, reduced its forces and focused on low-level negotiations than confrontation. When the founder of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammad Omar died, Mullah Akhter Mansour became the new leader. Mansour got killed in a US drone attack and Haibatullah Akhundzada became the new leader.

In the meanwhile, the Taliban seized Kunduz and they sent an open letter to the president urging him to withdraw the US forces from Afghanistan and pave the way for a formal talk between the US and Taliban. The talk ultimately culminated in an agreement between the two parties with the US assuring that its forces would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by May 2021. As the negotiation stated, many Taliban prisoners were released in 2020. When in 2021, Joe Biden became the President of US, he started withdrawing the US troops from Afghanistan. By May 2021, the Taliban captured areas of rural Afghanistan. The speed of Taliban's advance alarmed everybody. The border areas with the Central Asian republics and Pakistan were brought under control by July 2021. The Taliban took over Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif and important cities of Afghanistan. On August 15, 2021, the Taliban attacked Kabul and completed their final takeover of the country.

The Taliban also captured the equipment supplied by the US to the Afghan government. The House National Defence Authorization Act (NDAA), the Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimated that through FY2016, the US had funded the Afghans the transfer of over 75,000 vehicles (including Humvees and armoured personnel carriers); nearly 600,000 weapons (including rifles, pistols, machine guns and grenade launchers); over 16,000 night vision devices; and 208 aircrafts (including helicopters, transport/cargo airplanes, light attack airplanes).²¹ The US President Donald Trump said in a statement that the US must ask the Afghan government to give back the material supplied to them. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson of the Taliban, on September 7, 2021, announced the name of the acting ministers of the "caretaker cabinet". Haibatullah Akhundzada became the Emir, possessing the supreme power of the group. Mohammad Hassan Akhund became the acting prime minister while Abdul Ghani Baradar was made the acting deputy prime minister.

As the Taliban consolidated its power, it systematically excluded women from public life. Though they had initially promised to allow women to pursue education and career, they deviated from their words. Women were debarred from political participation and their welfare was marginalised by abolishing the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Women were again thrust to lead a very restrictive public life. Radio Sharia was used to remind women of their duties to the country and to Islam and the code of conduct that need to be followed.²² Their dreams got shattered and Afghanistan again became a land of nightmares for women. The UN has been making efforts to provide a platform to the shattered voices. A former government employee named Khatol said, "Before August, I had a normal life. I would work in an office together with my colleagues, including men. My children were going to school. I had dreams of a bright future for them that one day my children will become doctors, teachers, engineers." She further said, "My daughters are at home because schools are closed for them. My dreams for their future are all shattered. My life becomes bitter when I see my daughters with a disappointed look on their face."²³

With the comeback of the Taliban, women's liberties have been taken away; it has become mandatory to cover their bodies fully before stepping out

of their homes. Jamila, a psychologist, said that previously women used to step out of their home fearlessly, but now the fear has got instilled due to the return of the Taliban. She said, "After August last year, life has become a nightmare for me."²⁴ As interviewed by *Human Right Watch*, a woman said, "I went to work, but I was not allowed to go in. The Taliban members said, 'We don't need women to work anymore. You should not come back until further notice.' But we are breadwinners of our families."²⁵ As health and education were mainly financed by foreign donors, the aids were cut down. So, the female teachers and nurses remained unpaid for months. The women associated with farming activities were also not allowed to work. One woman said, "Now there are no jobs, no buying and selling. People have no jobs, no motivation and hope."²⁶ Shabnam Dawran, an Afghan news anchor shared her experience, "I didn't give up after the change of the system and went to attend my office. But unluckily I was not allowed to despite showing my office card...I was told that I couldn't continue my duty as the system has changed."²⁷

Women were not even allowed to travel alone without any male family member accompanying them. A woman activist said, "I do not have anyone at home to accompany me; neither a brother nor father. Who can accompany me? I am the one supporting my family."²⁸ For Khalida Popal, the ex-captain of the Afghan Football Team, football was her passion and for her, it was the way to freedom; she felt proud in wearing the national jersey. She said, "Today I am calling them and telling them to take down their names, remove their identities for their safety. Even I am telling them to burn down or to get rid of their national uniform and that is painful for me."²⁹ This showed how women had to give up their hard-earned success. As their success is standing in the way of their safety, girls are not allowed to go to school. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), is also struggling to reach adolescent girls to make them aware of menstrual health and hygiene, providing menstrual kits, work on anaemia prevention, providing iron and folic acid supplements, etc. Schools were the easiest medium to allow such things to reach them but with schools remaining closed, it is hard to reach the products to them. The UNICEF Afghanistan representative, Dr. Mohamed Ayoya said, "This is a pivotal juncture for a generation of children in Afghanistan. Girls' rights are under attack; their childhood are marred by deprivation."³⁰

Growing Women Resistance

Women's resistance movement is gradually growing up in Afghanistan. Khadija, who runs a religious school for girls said, "The Taliban are aware they can't silence us, and if they shut down the internet the world will know in less than five minutes. They will have to accept who we are and what we have become."³¹ Women have started organising themselves and have been joining protest movements. The banners they hold contain powerful messages like "Save Afghanistan from Disaster", "Why the world is watching us so cruelly?" etc. Women have been running underground schools secretly and girls are

attending schools risking their lives. A teacher teaching in a secret school while interviewed said, "I was shocked. I felt like I have lost a part of my body and I thought I have to do something."³² The girls also showed enough courage to attend school. A girl while asked by the interviewer what she wants to say to the girls of her age elsewhere in this world, said, "They should study, achieve and help their country...because we know how it is like not to have schools. We are stressed, we can't even leave our homes."³³ Khatol Farhod, a protest organiser, in an interview said, "After our faces are recognised, they now know us. Our photos were released and we gave interviews to the TV channels.... And now we are being chased and this is a serious problem."³⁴ She also was victimised by the Taliban and had to flee from her home. She was attacked and bruises on her body shows the marks of Taliban exploitation. Many women who were involved in protest movements were arrested and detained. Another woman, unwilling to mention her name, narrated her experience of how they were investigated after being arrested. She said, "They treated us very badly, they insulted us and told us to give away our organisation and asked us which party we work for and accused us of working for the resistance front. They took away our phones."³⁵ Human Rights Council has been working to mainstream women's voices. Women are working with bravery to fight. Ramzia Abdekhal, a woman protestor said, "We thought if the international community could hear our voices, they would be forced to act."³⁶ Though most of the protestors were young and had never been associated with any demonstration, they led the protest with determination. They made use of Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media platforms to reach out to more women and to motivate them to join the protest. #SaveAfghanWomen started as a campaign to support women and to amplify the voices of women's resistance. A young Afghan women protested with her hair covered not with a burqa but with Afghanistan's flag. She was leading a women's resistance movement on the Independence Day of Afghanistan and raising the slogan "Long Live Afghanistan. Our National Flag is Our Identity."³⁷ Samira Hamidi, an Amnesty International Campaigner in an interview said that many women protestors were threatened, many fled their homes, many disappeared and many were detained and tortured, so all attempts were made to weaken the women's resistance movement.³⁸ Khadija, a woman running a religious school in Afghanistan said, "The Taliban are aware they can't silence us, and if they shut down the internet the world will know in less than 5 minutes. They will have to accept who we are and what we have become."³⁹ The Taliban has adopted different means to stop the women's movement. They used to attack the protestors in the midst of the protest, arrest them, beat them, shoot in the air to terrify them, etc. Coercive measures were used to suppress the movement. When the Taliban was trying to restrict the revolutionary women's gatherings and demonstrations, women took to social media to generate a mass appeal nationally as well as internationally. Afghan women started posting their photos on social media wearing colourful attire to protest against the burqa diktat. The online campaign called #DoNotTouchMyClothes was a protest against the restrictions on the freedom to wear clothes according to one's own wish.

Social media was flooded with posts of photos of Afghan women in their traditional colourful dresses which for them is the real culture of Afghanistan which got tarnished as the Taliban started imposing their misogynist norms over women.⁴⁰ In Ghor province, women were seen to be demonstrating with heavy weapons in their hands to protest against the terror group who tried to erode their rights. The bravery and courage that women showed are really commendable.⁴¹

Conclusion

Women are gradually breaking their silence and are demanding their rightful share of human rights. Women activists are trying to organise demonstrations, protest movements and making efforts to break gender norms. Women are now aware of their exploitation and are trying to become the makers of their own destinies rather than being guided by misogynist rules and regulations. Having education and pursuing a career have become important to them as they have realised that only then can they become empowered and independent. Women's resistance movement has been gaining momentum as well and is catching the media's attention. Women are expressing their grievances and torture in front of the media in spite of knowing the fact that they can be targeted by extremist groups for that reason. Thus, women's narratives are posing a challenge to the master narratives. The grand narratives have always marginalised women's voices and women have hardly been provided any space to share their experiences. Women have been working hard to reform Afghan society so that their liberty can be ensured, injustice against them can be ended, gender equality can be established and women can get a respectful position in society.

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Understanding the Plight in Ukraine: How Humanitarian and Food Crises Impact International Security?

By

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In the history of global wars, the Second World War, one of the deadliest wars, is popularly recollected for certain crucial outcomes like the fall of Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and Fascist Italy (victory of the Allied Forces), decolonisation of Asia and Africa and the decline of the European international clout. However, the extent of destruction that it displayed still, in view of many observers, is unparalleled. The estimated death sums up to 40 to 50 million,¹ out of which, around 20 million deaths occurred owing to hunger and hunger-related factors.² Besides, there were around 21 to 25 million deaths that could be attributed to military causes.³ The devastation of the war was so massive that the casualty estimates extensively differed. With the end of the Second World War, the failure of the League of Nations, which became glaringly visible, paved the way for the establishment of the United Nations (UN). The UN was formed with the aim and belief that a confrontation on the scale of the Second World War or even worse would not take place in future. Nevertheless, the world experienced the onset of the Cold War that continued for more than four decades and witnessed the critical Korean War and the bloody Vietnam War.

The twentieth century experienced wars and conflicts at varying levels that exhibited conventional threats alongside nuclear risk. The military or conventional threats, traditionally faced by nations such as the attack on sovereign integrity, maritime space, issues related to trade or matters pertaining to international law were well depicted during the Cold War. However, there has been a significant shift in the threat outcomes of wars and conflicts in the twenty-first century. The concept of 'security' became

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synonymous or at times supplanted terms like 'defence', 'war' or 'strategy' both among policymakers and academic discourses. During the Cold War, security tended to mean national or bloc security and the primary threat was perceived to be an armed attack from an enemy nation or bloc.⁴ Having said that the twentieth-century wars and conflicts did have non-conventional outcomes, those generally did not get adequate attention as has been the case in the twenty-first century. During the Korean War (1950-53), an estimated 2.5 million lives were lost⁵ and an illness termed as Korean haemorrhagic fever caused by Hantavirus was prevalent during the Korean War.⁶ About 2 million Vietnamese civilian casualties were recorded during the Vietnam War (1954-75);⁷ 14 million tons of explosives were used by the American forces that destroyed dams, canals and farmlands and around 500,000 South Vietnamese women turned prostitutes during the war.⁸ A herbicide and defoliant chemical, Agent Orange, was used by the US military during the Vietnam War from 1961 to 1971, leading to severe health hazards amongst generations of Vietnamese people as well as killing or grossly affecting the health of US soldiers who served the war. These two wars during the Cold War period specifically underscored the importance of alternative referents of security that affect the surroundings quite as much as the conventional outcomes.

End of Cold War: Understanding Security Complex

With the end of the Cold War, the nature and character of armed conflicts underwent several changes. Part of this transformation was driven by further development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the increasing integration of modern technology with the military apparatus of major nation-states.⁹ Unlike the nature of confrontation that characterised most of the twentieth century, open conflicts were largely avoided by the major powers. Within the broader security environment, the threat of use of WMD paved the way for new geopolitical arrangements whereby the possibility of direct war decreases but that of non-conventional forms of conflict increases.¹⁰ This is not to exclude the possibility of a direct war between states, but as far as the collective human experience in the twenty-first century has been, conflicts between big powers seemed unlikely. The conflict between smaller states, however, has carried on intermittently, like the Second Congo War (1998-2003), the Syrian Civil War (ongoing since 2011) and the Darfur Conflict (2003). But this only serves to reinforce the previous argument that major states have avoided fighting with one another. The absence of conventional threats to security has now resulted in a situation where the very definition of security has to confront emerging realities like climate change, the incidence of epidemics and scarcity of food. In fact, as the Cold War ended, it indicated 'security' to be an essentially contested idea devoid of a generally accepted definition; not essentially universal or positive yet could be dependent on subject and context, also could be negative at times.¹¹ It is within the context of these new realities that analysts and researchers have to focus on the complex and interconnected nature of interactions and exchanges between a

number of actors (including but not limited to nation-states) on a domestic, regional and international scale which constitute the behaviour of geopolitical rivalries that in turn play a large role in shaping this century.

The free movement of capital and labour within and between states, and the enormous improvement in Information and Communication Technology have led to the development of complex trade networks and supply chains that often span across territories and geographies. Amitav Acharya has observed that the economic rise of states throughout Asia¹² and the relative decline in the US hegemony has ushered in a world where competition, cooperation and conflict occur simultaneously at several levels, leading to a multiplex world.¹³ States have become economically interdependent to a degree, but the issue of distrust, competition and eventual conflict continue to influence strategic thinking at a national level. International actors now confront two distinct yet related realities. While economic exchange is now an important factor for the survival and well-being of states, security-related complexities threaten to disrupt the fragile international order.

Throughout the major part of the twentieth century, we found global wars being predominantly constricted to continental Europe; the ones that were fought in Asia or Africa were proxy wars. For instance, the war in Afghanistan (Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) in 1979, a proxy war between the American and the Soviet forces, was one of the turning points that brought an end to the Soviet regime and the Cold War. From the traditional perspective, the invasion had led to several thousand casualties and had brutally affected Afghan society; and, this is still evident. Nevertheless, the outcome of this invasion was not only life losses but also rendered a large number of people homeless and displaced many, bearing a deep impact on the surrounding region; however, the crucial development was the birth of terrorist forces in South Asia. The Mujahideen (later became the Taliban) became a force to reckon with throughout the region during the initial aftermath of the war and later culminated to the ghastly terrorist activity at the beginning of the twenty-first century (the September 11 attacks) that thoroughly altered the concept and status of global security. As a matter of fact, the conceptualisation of security changed massively; surveillance activities within and among Muslim communities increased, often connecting them with terrorism because 'they' suit a particular profile.¹⁴

As the non-traditional outcome of war, terrorism, which ravaged the region and the world, led to other associated humanitarian crises. In the years after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan, Yugoslavia experienced localised terror activities in the form of ethnic clashes. The theatre of war, which in the twentieth century was restricted to Europe, got significantly altered in the twenty-first century; the ramifications of a conflict are now felt both regionally and globally. The twenty-first-century wars impacted and continue to affect the everyday lives of human beings around the world. The most disturbing and perplexing aspect of the conflicts of this century is the proliferative nature of security-related issues that stem from them. These security issues transmogrify into further complications that

slowly become unmanageable. While the case of Afghanistan is significant due to its role in the destabilisation of the entire South Asian region and indeed parts of West Asia, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has set off a chain reaction whereby the already fragile post-pandemic geo-economic order has come under enormous strain. The economic devastation coupled with the humanitarian crises has sent shockwaves throughout the region and the world, whereby the possibility of food shortages and migrant crises can lead to global instability. The following sections will go into a detailed analysis of this issue and its subsets.

Outline of the Ukrainian Crisis

Russia and Ukraine have a long common past that dates back to over a millennium to the creation of the first Slavic state, Kyivan Rus, in parts of what are today Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Although in 1918, Ukraine became independent, in 1921, the Red Army captured most of it making Ukraine a republic within the Soviet Union. In the 1930s, Soviet policies led to the man-made famine known as the Holodomor, which killed an estimated 7 million Ukrainians, and this incident sharpened the Ukrainian sense of national identity. In 1991, with the breakdown of the Soviet regime, Ukraine regained its independence. However, over the years, relations between both countries were never easy. In early 2014, Russia supported the seizure and annexation of Crimea by the pro-Moscow separatist groups in Ukraine. The crisis claimed an estimated 14,000 lives.¹⁵

Since February 2015, France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine have tried to undergo negotiations for bringing an end to the violence under the regulations of the Minsk Accords, which, however, were largely unsuccessful. The prelude to the Minsk Accords can be traced back to the conflict that began with the capture of large swathes of territory in Eastern Ukraine by Russia-backed separatists. Following large-scale destruction and casualties, the representatives of the states of Russia, Ukraine, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the separatist leaders, Alexander Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky, consensually arrived at a plan for ceasefire based on 12 points. This was the Minsk One Deal, signed in Belarus in 2014.¹⁶ Its provisions focused on initiating prisoner exchanges, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid and the simultaneous withdrawal of heavy weapons. The sanctity of the agreement, however, was short-lived, and with escalating conflict, the necessity of a successor agreement arose. In February 2015, Minsk Two was signed between Russian President Vladimir Putin and the then Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, mediated by the erstwhile French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. By far, the most important provision of this argument was to initiate a process of dialogue for the process of setting up interim self-government in the provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk.¹⁷ The most important issue with the Minsk accords was the divergent and often conflicting interpretations of the same by Russia and Ukraine, leading to a period of tenuous peace which international observers described as the Minsk conundrum. The developments

that ensued did little to create lasting conditions for peace. In April 2016, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) notified the rollout of four battalions to Eastern Europe, rotating troops through Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland, to put off possible upcoming Russian aggression anywhere in the continent, particularly in the Baltics. NATO's presence was further strengthened in the region in September 2017, when two US Army tank brigades were sent to Poland. In October 2018, Ukraine along with the United States and seven other NATO countries carried out a series of large-scale air exercises in western Ukraine.

It was on February 24, 2022 that the Russian military forces attacked a largely underprepared Ukraine; Russian President Putin called it a 'special military operation' aimed at demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine.¹⁸ With accusations against the Ukrainian government of "genocide" against ethnic Russians and native Russian speakers in the Donbas, Putin justified the invasion which led to displacing a total of at least 12 million¹⁹ Ukrainians (till the end of August 2022). What must be noted here is that historically, the Russian view of Ukraine has always been one of identification. The people of Ukraine and Belarus were considered as ethnically and culturally Russian. The problems with territoriality began after First World War, especially after the Bolshevik Revolution. In 1918, Ukraine declared its independence from the disintegrating Russian Empire in the wake of its disastrous performance in the First World War. The declaration proved to be short-lived, as Soviet forces overthrew its government²⁰ and established the Ukrainian Soviet Socialistic Republic in 1921.²¹ Relations between Moscow and Ukraine reached a nadir when the Stalinist policy of 'collectivisation' resulted in a devastating famine in Ukraine leading to the deaths of millions of people. However, the actual bone of contention in the relationship is the lack of settled borders and a volatile territorial arrangement whereby both Russia and Ukraine claim parts of the other's territory as their own. Notwithstanding the fraught historical trajectory of relations between the two states, it would seem that geography and territory have been the major contributing factors in the Russia-Ukraine conflict; the territory has again played the role of a catalyst in the current conflagration. The extent and complexity of the ongoing Ukraine crisis have not only sent shockwaves throughout continental Europe and the world, but the fact that a major conflict could take place in the continent in the twenty-first century has also opened the lid of serious conventional as well as non-conventional threats that impact the world at large.

Local and Global Impact of the Crisis

Since the Second World War, the Russian attack on Ukraine has been the greatest humanitarian crisis in Europe. The decision-making elite and political brass on the continent had resolved to never let a crisis like Second World War ever break out. With the march of Russian troops into Ukraine, the failure of that particular resolve is laid bare. The most immediate impact of the conflict can be studied at the local level, with countless refugees fleeing the war-torn areas into other parts of continental Europe, setting off a chain

reaction with the European states compelled to manage their economies under the dual effect of a post-pandemic world with slowing economic growth and an influx of people in the form of those escaping the war. In order for a holistic appreciation of the situation, certain facts need to be recognised. The economic outlook of the European Union, indeed Europe itself, was not very promising throughout the decade of 2010.

With economic engines slowing down, the incidence of declining birth rates and the challenge of accommodating refugees, the ongoing war in Ukraine, which has completed seven months, has pushed millions of civilians, irrespective of their economic condition, to become homeless refugees (either to Poland, Romania, Moldova and other adjacent countries) or internally displaced persons (to other parts of the country where military assault is limited). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has also mentioned that over 2 million Ukrainians²² have taken refuge in Russia. Many Ukrainians are still forced to live without access to food, water, health care and other essential supplies; innumerable people have lost their income creating a severe humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Data shows that till mid-September over 7 million refugees²³ from Ukraine have moved across Europe. According to the latest report of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Ukraine, over 3 million IDPs are being hosted in 21 oblasts (administrative divisions or regions in Ukraine).²⁴ In a report published by the IOM in June 2022, it was stated that there has been a significant amount of increase in the number of returnees to war-torn Ukraine—primarily people from different locations of Ukraine, particularly Kyiv and the northern part, who returned to their homes; only 10 per cent people are returning to Ukraine from other countries.²⁵ According to UNHCR data, recorded until mid-July 2022, 3.7 million Ukrainians had registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe; with more than 1.2 million beneficiaries of temporary protection (BTPs), Poland stands as the main destination country, followed by Germany (670,000), the Czech Republic (396,000) and Italy (143,000).²⁶ This has resulted in an increase in the secondary mobility of Ukrainian refugees in other European countries.

In the initial phase of the outbreak of the war, Ukraine imposed martial law across the country that prevented men between the ages of 18 and 60 from leaving the country. This led to the first waves of the Ukrainian refugee movement predominantly consisting of the elderly, women and children—a section that cannot be considered as the highly productive labour workforce. With the passage of time, young men have also fled Ukraine for a safe and better future. However, with EU countries providing Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) to facilitate the entry and stay of Ukrainian refugees, it has offered an opportunity to the refugees to get hold of work without any prohibitions or delay as and when they get their residence permit or provisional certificates. Nevertheless, this war has exerted huge stress on the job and labour markets of other European countries that have also played host to refugees from Ukraine. The labour markets have been adversely affected by a dual problem: the replacement of a skilled pool of Ukrainian

workers with groups of low-skilled and unskilled labourers from Ukraine, which have accompanied the steady influx of refugees in other European states. This has created fractious economic structures, where the number of people competing for low-skilled jobs has increased exponentially. It has coupled with ethnic strife and the eventual polarisation of the society, polity and economy as a whole. The collapse of the labour markets through shrinking economic growth and the pressure of catering to a growing number of refugees has resulted in ripple effects on the economic integration of Europe and the fragile socio-political linkages holding Europe.

If Europe is suffering from humanitarian crises owing to the Russian attack on Ukraine, the Central Asian states are no less affected. The landlocked Central Asian Republics (CARs),²⁷ which are acutely dependent on Russia for the labour market, export routes and many infrastructure projects, a protracted conflict between Russia-Ukraine and the resultant global isolation of Russia holds immense difficulties for them. The flow of remittances has been interrupted, impacting the states of Central Asia, especially Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which severely depend on remittances sent by their migrant workforce. According to a study, remittances, being the significant income source for most of the CARs, are expected to fall by 25 per cent in 2022. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are expected to face a huge blow with a 22 per cent and 33 percent decline in remittances respectively.²⁸ For economically under-developed Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, such a decline in remittances makes them vulnerable to an economic crisis. Moreover, following the footsteps of a Russian ban on the export of grain and white sugar to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) since March 10, 2022, Kazakhstan has also decided to stop wheat exports to countries like Kyrgyzstan, which is primarily dependent on Russia and Kazakhstan for its major wheat imports. This ongoing Ukraine crisis has the potential to augment frustration amongst its unemployed youth that could lead to civil unrest and exhaustive instability, particularly in poor CARs like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, thus broadening the ethnic fault lines in the region.²⁹ It is also significant to note here that the Ukrainian refugee crisis has underscored the argument that there remains a difference in approach to refugee management or acceptance of refugees into Europe. Regarding the level of acceptance that the Ukrainians had while moving into other European countries, records suggest that in the past, Syrian or Moroccan refugees were not openly accepted by European countries. As unfortunate as it could be, it reflects a sharp departure from the idea of equality and justice for all.

The War and Sustainability

A dire situation like the Ukraine war brings into perspective three very important realities, related to one another. The first concerns the status of security of vulnerable groups within Europe, especially Eastern Europe. This issue appeared to be settled until the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This point will be further expanded and expounded upon in the following sections. The second reality is the fragile state of the Sustainable Development Goals

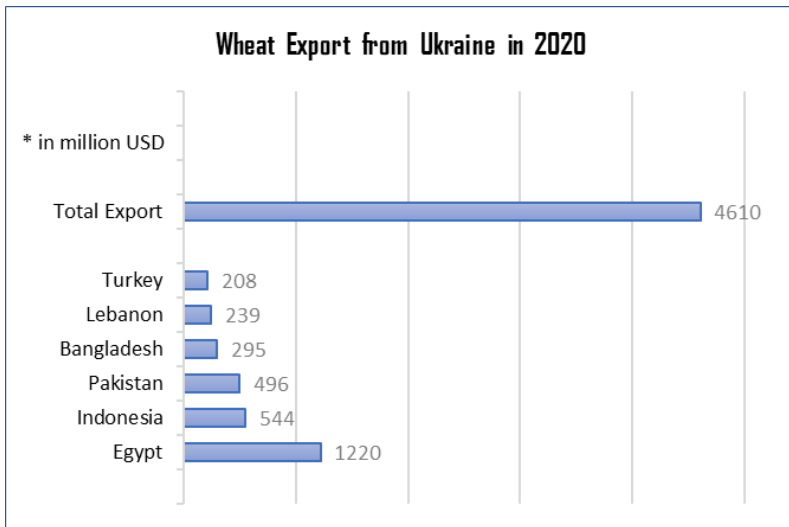
(SDGs) and the lack of any commitment towards them on the part of political leaders around the world. The SDGs were an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, which itself was the result of a process of negotiations conducted by member nations of the United Nations General Assembly among and between themselves. The consensus that was arrived at, as a result of the aforementioned negotiations, laid out 17 SDGs. The details of these goals will be elaborated upon as this article progresses, but the factor that relates the SDGs to the Ukraine crisis is the array of non-conventional security threats. As the war in Ukraine has transpired, it has become increasingly clear that while the security concerns of territorial nation-states are important problems to ponder upon by policymakers, strategists and analysts, the security of people and vulnerable or marginalised groups is often ignored, leading to several problems. Therefore, the SDGs and the factor of non-conventional security are related. The 17 SDGs are as follows:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequality
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships to achieve the Goal

Since 2015, global efforts undertaken to achieve these goals have not been sufficient and the status of these goals remains frangible and frail. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has reinforced the notion that the nation states, particularly the major powers, are unconcerned about the fructification of the SDGs and are more interested in territorial concerns, geopolitical power competition and self-preservation. States come into being to attain these ends, and the interests of citizens and people around the world are not prioritised.

In June 2022 the chief of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) warned the world of the upcoming fierce food shortages and starvation if the war did not stop.³⁰ While the impact of the pandemic had led to food price rises across the world, the extension of the war in Ukraine has completely failed to attain the second SDG that aimed to tackle global hunger. In fact, the rising food insecurity does not stay limited to the failure of not achieving the second SDG; it also affects other goals pertaining to inequality and poverty.

Ukraine feeds millions of stomachs across the world and this war has jeopardised the import of foodgrains, especially wheat and maize and sunflower oil by many Asian and African countries.



Source: *Observatory of Economic Complexity*³¹

According to statements by Ukraine's agriculture ministry till mid-August, its grain exports are down in the 2022–23 season by 46 per cent since last year during the same time.³² As the data of the State Customs Service of Ukraine show that since the start of 2022-23 MY (July 1) and as of August 31, Ukraine has exported 3.946 million tons of grains and pulses, which includes 2.264 million tons in August,³³ it hints at the dip in the harvesting land and lower grain yields as acres of land has been lost to the Russian military forces. Grain exports from Ukraine have slumped as the war began leading to the blocking of the Black Sea ports—a key route for shipments to and fro Ukraine, shooting up food prices across the globe and triggering fears of food shortages in Africa and the Middle East. Egypt is a key importer of wheat from Ukraine—82 per cent of its wheat imports throughout the last five years came from Russia (59.7 per cent) and Ukraine (22.3 per cent). The war in Ukraine has led to a shortage of wheat imports—during the Egyptian calendar year (CY) 2022 (January to May), wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine amounted to 3.32 million metric tons against 4.35 million metric tons in CY 2021 during the same period.³⁴ This war-induced decline is driving wheat prices to unmatched levels and soaring market volatility. Subsequently, the high inflation rates across the globe due to the war make things worse for the poor inevery society. An increase in food prices leads to the inaccessibility of basic food items, thus bringing the third SDG for good health and well-being under the scanner. Currently, going through a plethora of crises—climate change, after-effects of the pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine—pushing millions of people throughout the world at risk of being driven into starvation, the SDG Agenda 2030 is doomed to fail.

The economic outlook of the globe had not been favourable owing to the pandemic and its effect on supply chains. As states initiated lockdowns and restrictions on the free flow of human beings and capital among and between themselves, normal trade and trade-related activities ceased, slowing down economic growth. The first SDG that focuses on zero poverty was compromised even before the war started. With the onset of the conflict and the ensuing energy crisis, the cost of living has soared. The rise of inflation has led to a decrease in real incomes of people, and understandably the poor have been the hardest hit with them having to choose between two sets of essential items micronutrient-rich food and life-saving medicines. The vicious cycle of poverty is such that the lack of resources translates into a lack of choices pertaining to individual and collective lifestyles. Constrained life choices of communities around the world mean that almost 71 million people³⁵ have fallen into poverty since the start of the Ukraine War. Sharply rising commodity prices are forcing the economically marginalised to spend a major part of their real incomes on a few items, leading to a decrease in savings which means that in a moment of health emergency the poor are being left without protection.³⁶ The goal of zero poverty is currently relegated to the status of a utopian fantasy. As a matter of fact, the uneven picture of the labour market owing to the war has also questioned the SDG on decent work and growth, alongside the one on industry and infrastructure. This situation further reinforces the argument that the state's commitment to the fructification of the SDGs is capricious at best.

As most global leaders, international observers and analysts have been reiterating that the war must stop soon, it not only shows their humanitarian concern but also the fear of worse things to come. A prolonged war would adversely affect other essential elements of living and livelihood such as oil and energy, the huge demand and high prices of which have already appeared to haunt the European countries. To put things into perspective, sustainability is an overarching idea that fulfils the requirements of current generations without compromising the requirements of upcoming ones, while striking a balance between economic development, environmental protection and social well-being. Any one element of sustenance, if compromised, would disrupt the larger aim.

Subsequent Non-Traditional Security Concerns

The previous section devoted to the analysis and explanation of the critical linkages and relations between the effects of the war and the achievement of the SDGs has actually highlighted the failure of states to attain the objectives of the Sustainable Development Program. The preceding section of the paper argues that the failure to achieve the SDGs is closely connected with the emergence of non-traditional security issues. The issue of non-traditional security revolves around several key components. The origin of these threats is not caused by the shifting balance of power equations among and between states, nor is the aspect of competition that states engage in can be said to be responsible for the emergence of these threats. These threats almost always

have a distinct socio-economic and politico-cultural dimension and stem from changes in climate and scarcity of food and energy. Interestingly, an entire gamut³⁷ of human security concerns can be observed in this context and the onset of the new millennium and the concomitant development of a globalised world with unrestrained movement of people have only added to the complexity. An important point that needs to be noted here is that while the debates surrounding access to human rights have contemporary significance, Non-Traditional Security (NTS) issues have led to renewed interest in the questions surrounding human rights, especially in the relatively less prosperous and developed regions of the world as compared to the developed countries.

In the context of the Russia-Ukraine War, while the standards of living and the quality of life of Europe can be said to be appreciatively higher than in most parts of the world, the triple effect of economic downturn in a post-pandemic world, unstable and volatile labour markets and the sudden influx of refugees have completely altered the settled geopolitical and geo-economic arrangements that were crucial to the sustenance of the idea of a united and harmonious Europe. The vortex of socio-economic tensions released or created as a result of the outbreak of conflict can lead to several crises. As a matter of fact, the non-traditional crises will not be specifically limited to Europe but will be felt across the world sooner or later. History holds anecdotes of food scarcity, inequality, poverty or social injustice leading to the creation of misanthropic groups, which had affected global peace and stability. Moreover, social injustices and socio-economic crises instigate religious fanaticism as victims of inequality or injustice can be misled or economically lured easily. Therefore, the possibility and propensity of extreme social tension owing to the collective alienation and marginalisation of groups appear as an extremely serious issue. In the case of Europe, fragile economic systems that have come into being as a result of unstable labour markets and the steady movement of refugees into other regions of Europe, putting pressure on the already stressed socio-economic setups recovering from the pandemic, can ultimately lead to the creation of socially static and hostile groups. These groups will then engage in intense social strife with each other, scrambling over limited resources and space. An important point here is that the destabilisation of the economy and the polarisation of society go hand in hand. The fact that most major European states have overblown defence budgets, confirms the suspicion that the military-industrial complex benefits tremendously from the war. At the expense of the life and prolonged well-being of vulnerable people, the viability and sustainability of the arms industry remain one of the most important facilitator and catalysts of conflicts on the European continent.

The deepening social strife will ultimately compromise the internal security of the European states. State response in the form of conventional securitisation will only seek to reify the influence of arms manufacturers and destroy the scope of conciliation and solidarity between the social groups which are susceptible to militant contests with one another. The final status of the problem will be the reversal of integration, one that Europe painstakingly

undertook as a process over decades. As Europe will strengthen its borders, the casualty of human development will have a proliferative impact on the regional neighbourhood, especially the West Asian, North African and Central Asian regions. Thus, the cumulative impact of an armed conflict can be seen to have multiple complex manifestations. At the most immediate level, it has created a massive humanitarian crisis, unprecedented since the Second World War. As the crisis has progressed, aspects of security which were hitherto ignored by states have emerged to the extent that these crises have the potential to negatively and irreversibly alter the systemic and structural set-up of the European continent.

Furthermore, the impact of snowballing non-conventional security issues will adversely affect the stability, peace and security of the wider region. This warlike situation characterised by intense armed conflict, in an almost paradoxical yet cyclical manner, gives rise to several non-traditional security issues which in turn crystallise into problems that compel states to engage in conflict with one another in a separate geographic theatre. The only common thread here is the sacrifice of human life and the lack of a well-defined regional and status architecture that secures the interests and lives of citizens and marginalised groups.

Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, competition amongst and between states is a common phenomenon in international politics. However, wars or conflicts emanating from that sense of competition are unjustifiable even through the lens of realism; it is the people who are worst hit and the resulting humanitarian crisis not only remains restricted to the duration and the territorial expanse of the conflict but engulfs much beyond. Wars in the twenty-first century are bound to raise probing questions about the global security framework. This is not because it holds a significant impact on the global population and economy but it certainly challenges the basic premise of globalisation.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is comparatively a smaller conflict than the First World War or even lesser in scale than the atrocious humanitarian crisis of the Second World War. Nevertheless, the clash is a colossal step away from globalisation and, unlike the First World War, its timing is such when the world has already been shifting away from economic integration, the multiplier effect of the Russia-Ukraine war and post-pandemic economic order has resulted in massive currency fluctuations around the world.³⁸ As a result of these fluctuations, the dollar has appreciated tremendously in comparison to other currencies³⁹ setting off a chain of events which may lead to a decline in global economic growth⁴⁰ and eventually usher in a recession. The palpable decline in global growth has been actually reflected by the reports of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development that has downgraded the rate of global growth from 2.8 per cent to 2.2 per cent in 2022 with the Eurozone witnessing an even more steep

decline in economic growth from 3.1 per cent in 2022 and expected to fall even lower to 0.3 per cent in 2023.⁴¹

Globalisation was mandated with the critical task of integrating the world into one cohesive entity—encompassing economy, culture and society—obscuring differences amongst states and establishing a ‘global community’. The war has challenged this idea of a global community in more than one way. If sustainability is a ground of community sentiment, the very being of human dignity offers a community feeling. Refugee influx from Syria has been a pressing concern for Europe over the last few years, hence another refugee crisis in Ukraine not only overburdens Europe but the entire world. Also, as the war has impacted Ukrainian agriculture, in the food-deficient Middle East, prices for food are already soaring and will rise, even more, reflecting on how the war is failing the concept of globalisation. Food shortages are affecting Asian and African states as well. Globalisation means more than just ‘global supply chains’, highlighting on the movement of cheap raw materials and constituents to assembly units on the periphery of industrial centres. Therefore, the collapse of low-cost off-shore manufacturing units points to the disruption of global supply chains. Subsequently, any disruption in the supply chain is bound to have serious ramifications for the global population, interrupting the functioning and parameters of social justice.

As global security underlines ‘what is best for all’,⁴² it is in the interest of all that the war in Ukraine comes to an end at the earliest. With the onset of winter, in terms of energy requirements in Europe, food shortage across the world and humanitarian crises, the tension between Russia and Ukraine must end and the way is through cooperation and the attempt to work together. States must understand that no national security mechanism has the scope to manage by itself alone, therefore, they need to call for the cooperation of states. As fear or sense of security threat breeds rivalry between or among states, the global interconnectedness, interdependence and cooperation that the world has experienced amongst states and continues to do so since the end of the Cold War, holds the remedy for such rivalry.

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Report

As the West Goes to War, Crafting Peace Question Today

By

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Is West the World?

Paula Banerjee

War and peace have been intricately related not just in binary existence, but also in its denial to be dealt on the same continuum. As we discuss the peace question while the West is at war, we need to look back and see where actually shall we start concerning ourselves with the peace question—whether it would be with the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan or the Ukraine-Russia war or look for its root even earlier tracing back to the World Wars. For Afghanistan, the peace question was vexing as the United States left what they have been controlling and maneuvering for a long time. They left probably because it served their purpose to leave. Then we have the Ukraine-Russia war, a confrontation between the so-called democratic Europe and Russia. Interestingly, this arouses us to mediate on the question whether we are heading towards another World War or not. As Europe assumes that it encompasses countries, which were part of its colonial legacy, the ‘Third World,’ or the ‘Global South,’ or Africa, or Asia is all considered portions of Europe. So, Europe and the United States constantly tend to ask this part of

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the world to take sides. With Russia staying away from such attempts, Europe assumes that if this part does not take sides, it would probably serve their interests better. A large part of the erstwhile non-aligned countries has remained silent on the multiple questions raised about sanctions, aids to be sent and so on. Against the backdrop of such developments, it is important to ponder on certain questions: What happens to peace or to the workers of the world? Is this conflict really about two world views? Is it about democracy or lack of it thereof? Is Ukraine the representative of all democratic countries? So, what is that we need to do? By keeping silent, would the purpose of the workers, migrants and thousands of people who, as Sandro Mezzadra says, have been decoupled from the position of power be served? What happens to food security and the nation's safekeeping? How to deal with the questions of consumption and control of energy supplies? And, most importantly, is it necessary to have a hierarchical refugee community for democracy? Some are insisting for the rearmament of the world or naming the ongoing conflict as the clash of two different worlds. What happens to the common people who are dragged into this war? Will they be forced to take sides or can they remain non-aligned?

The West Goes to War

Sandro Mezzadra

While the war does not stop, alignments and balances on a global scale are being redefined. In the coming years, the post-war period is destined to be marked by militarisation and rearmament dynamics. Without much speculation, it seems almost certain that a long duration of the war in Ukraine (low or high intensity) does not seem unwelcome to some of the most important global players. This is true for at least part of the US establishment, as evident in Joe Biden's speech in Warsaw. The wearing down of Russia in a sort of European Afghanistan, regardless of the potential overflow of the conflict towards the west and east, would in fact constitute an extraordinary opportunity to continue the process of reconstruction of the West that the American administration has pursued since its inauguration. The European Union, in particular, would accelerate its military integration under the double pressure of the Eastern European countries and NATO, confirming that the leading function of the United States since the Great War has defined the very concept of the West. Those who complain of the latter's "suicide," renewing a genre that now has a long history (which began in the years of the Great War with works such as *The Decline of the West* by Oswald Spengler and *The Passing of the Great Race* by Madison Grant), do nothing else, consistently with the canon of that genre, but call the West to arms.

It is good to ask ourselves what are the material conditions in which this relatively new configuration of the West (which had been decisively marginalised in the Trump years) is located, going further than the obligatory alignment that dominates public discourse and official politics in Italy and beyond. It is good to open a research yard to which these notes intend to give nothing more than a first contribution. Let's start from "globalisation," which,

with the pandemic, has been celebrated to have ended by many voices. The war, linking itself to the same pandemic, determines in this regard a leap in scale. It was no less than Larry Fink, the founder of BlackRock, who declared in his annual letter to shareholders that "the Russian invasion of Ukraine has put an end to globalisation as we have experienced it over the past three decades". The "decoupling" of the Russian economy from the global circuits determined by the sanctions is evidently assumed by Fink as an anticipation of broader processes of reorganisation on a "regional" basis of the markets, while in the entire long letter, as Adam Tooze noted, China, where BlackRock has substantial interests, is never mentioned.

We have always affirmed the irreversibility of economic interdependence at the global level, which war itself confirms with its asymmetrical but pervasive effects. Though this position should not be modified, it should be taken as a background for evaluating the prospects of a decoupling that could represent a new way of governing that interdependence, therefore of globalisation (while only in the last instance can represent a break option, with costs that are difficult to evaluate). At issue may certainly be a reorganisation of "supply chains" within "regional" (i.e., tending to be continental) spaces, with the emergence of a new global geography of production that was repeatedly evoked during the pandemic. Addressing inflation is another key issue. But the prospects for "disengagement" also concern the financial, banking (with the emergence and consolidation of alternative systems to the Swift circuit) and monetary terrain. From this last point of view, a study for the International Monetary Fund by Serkan Arslanap, Barry Eichengreen and Chima Simpson-Bell, entitled "The Stealth Erosion of Dollar Dominance," documents a progressive loss of centrality of the dollar as a reserve currency worldwide, essentially in favour of the Chinese renminbi and currencies of other countries (which do not include the pound and the euro). The war in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia can undoubtedly be powerful accelerators of this trend, as the current conflicts around the currency for gas payments show. A "new global monetary disorder" is on the horizon, as Martin Wolf writes in the *Financial Times*, and sanctions on Russia's central bank could push towards the consolidation of an axis with Beijing on this very ground.

"Decoupling" does not necessarily refer to a rupture of globalisation, but rather outlines perspectives for its governance that undoubtedly represent very significant changes with respect to the history (far from linear, on the other hand) of the last 30 years. It is from this point of view that it is necessary to take up the question of the position the West occupies today, in order to grasp the meaning of its belligerent recomposition around the United States. We must once again stress on the basic tendency that what is happening today around the war in Ukraine is the relative decline of the United States (therefore of the West) as a hegemonic power on a global level. The economic processes mentioned earlier already make this clear. But other elements can be added. For example, an interview published in *The Wire* is instructive, where the sanctions against Russia are defined as "economic weapons of mass destruction", with a reference to their impact on the Russian

population (and not on the elites) but also and above all at a global level, with potentially devastating food crises in many parts of the world. The fact is that the person speaking is Raghuram Rajan, who among other things was Governor of the Indian Central Bank from 2013 to 2016 and is currently Professor of Finance Science at the University of Chicago. In other words: we can well imagine that such an assessment of Western sanctions is widespread at the popular level and among leftist forces in a country like India. The fact that it is formulated so strongly from within the elites of an emerging country and yet it remains to be important for the very strategy of US alliances in a critical area of the world seems to signal landslides of another nature.

It is from this point of view that we must evaluate the fact that among the 10 most populous countries in the world, only one, not surprisingly the United States, has expressed full support for the sanctions against Russia and that 30 African countries out of 54 have twice abstained from voting at the United Nations General Assembly. These are figures that indicate an evident disconnect between the reality of world politics and the West's claim to represent—once again—"humanity". Certainly, the echo of Fanon's words about Europe is still alive, "which never stops talking about man, even though it massacres him wherever it meets him", vividly exemplified by the infinite number of "Western" wars and by the policy of the "double standard" (China, to give an example, does not forget the bombing of its embassy in Belgrade in 1999). But the point here is more general, and concerns a series of developments that are materially making the West only a part (albeit still powerful) in a now multipolar world. To be clear: there is no "third-worldism" behind this statement; the trends underway do not necessarily outline a better world than the one centered on the West—and they certainly do not lead beyond capitalism. But they are indeed ongoing trends, which it is good "not to deride, not to pity, not to despise, but to understand".

It is against the background of these tendencies that we have to pose the problem of an anti-war policy in Europe, capable of countering the aggressive and militaristic recomposition of the West while developing at the same time what in the history of the latter has always countered it—just as it has countered the devices of exploitation and domination that have bound together capital, empires and the state. At the beginning of the twentieth century, before the racist lamentations about the end of the West by Spengler and Grant took shape, the great African-American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois, invited by Max Weber to write for a prestigious German magazine, concluded his essay as follows: "remember one thing above all: the day of the coloured races is dawning. It is folly to stop this development; it is great wisdom to promote what this dawn promises in terms of light and hope for the future."

Having changed what needs to be changed, these lines indicate quite precisely our task in the present: to make Europe a platform for a peaceful transition to a different architecture and distribution of power on a global scale. We know that transitions of this kind are rarely peaceful, and the war in Ukraine does not bode well. It is only by combining the struggle against war with a permanent mobilisation on social and economic issues, with a new class

struggle, without any nostalgia for helmets and cannons, whether eastern or western, that we can aim to build in Europe a configuration of forces capable of sustaining a world politics of peace.

Why the Left Should Oppose All Wars

Marcello Musto

There's a long and rich tradition of the left's opposition to militarism that dates back to the First International. It's an excellent resource for understanding the origins of war and helping leftists maintain our clear opposition to it. While political science has probed the ideological, political, economic and even psychological motivations behind the drive to war, socialist theory has a unique contribution by highlighting the relationship between the development of capitalism and war. The left has long theorised its opposition to war, and the main positions of socialist theorists and organisations over the past 150 years offer useful resources for opposing Russia's aggression against Ukraine, as well as for continuing to oppose NATO. Rarely have wars—not to be confused with revolutions—had the democratising effect as hoped by the theorists of socialism. Indeed, they have often proved themselves to be the worst way of carrying out a revolution, both because of the human cost and because of the destruction of the productive forces that they entail. If this was true in the past, it is even more evident in contemporary societies where weapons of mass destruction are proliferating continually.

The Economic Causes of War

In the debates of the First International, César de Paepe, one of its principal leaders, formulated the classical position of the workers' movement on the question of war—that wars are inevitable under the regime of capitalist production. In contemporary society, wars are brought about not by the ambitions of monarchs or other individuals but by the dominant social-economic model. The lesson for the workers' movement came from the belief that any war should be considered “a civil war,” a ferocious clash between workers that deprived them of the means necessary for their survival. Karl Marx never developed any consistent or systematic position on war in his writings. In *Capital, Volume I*, he argued that violence was an economic force, “the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one.” But he did not think of war as a crucial shortcut for the revolutionary transformation of society, and a major aim of his political activity was to commit workers to the principle of international solidarity.

War was such an important question for Friedrich Engels that he devoted one of his last pieces of writing to it. In his pamphlet “Can Europe Disarm?”, he noted that in the previous 25 years, every major power had tried to outdo its rivals militarily and in terms of war preparations. This had involved unprecedented levels of arms production and brought the Old Continent closer to “a war of destruction such as the world has never seen”. According to Engels, “The system of standing armies has been carried to such

extremes throughout Europe that it must either bring economic ruin to the peoples on account of the military burden, or else degenerate into a general war of extermination". He emphasised that standing armies were maintained just as much for reasons of domestic politics as they were for external military purposes. According to Engels, forces were strengthened to repress the proletariat and workers' struggles. As popular layers paid more than anyone else the costs of war, through taxes and the provision of troops to the state, the workers' movement should fight for "the gradual reduction of the term of [military] service by international treaty" and for disarmament as the only effective "guarantee of peace".

Tests and Collapse

It did not take long to turn a peacetime theoretical debate into the foremost political issue of the age. Initially, representatives of the workers' movement opposed any support for war when the Franco-Prussian conflict (the one which preceded the Paris Commune) erupted in 1870. The Social Democrat deputies Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel condemned the annexationist objectives of Bismarck's Germany and voted against war credits. Their decision to "reject the bill for additional funding to continue the war" not only earned them a two-year prison sentence for high treason, but also helped to show the working class an alternative way to build on the crisis. As the major European powers kept up their imperialist expansion, the controversy on war acquired ever greater weight in the debates of the Second International. A resolution adopted at its founding congress had enshrined peace as "the indispensable precondition of any emancipation of the workers".

As the *Weltpolitik*—the aggressive policy of Imperial Germany to extend its power in the international arena—changed the geopolitical setting, anti-militarist principles sank deeper roots in the workers' movement and influenced the discussions on armed conflicts. War was no longer seen only as hastening the breakdown of the system (an idea on the left going back to Maximilien Robespierre's slogan, "no revolution without revolution"). It was now viewed as a danger because of its grievous consequences for the proletariat in the shape of hunger, destitution and unemployment. The resolution "On Militarism and International Conflicts," adopted by the Second International at its Stuttgart Congress in 1907, recapitulated all the key points that had become the common heritage of the workers' movement. Among these were a vote against budgets that increased military spending, antipathy to standing armies and a preference for a system of people's militias. As the years passed, the Second International's commitment to peace lessened, and by the time of the First World War, the majority of European socialist parties voted to support it—a course of action that had disastrous consequences. Arguing that the "benefits of progress" should not be monopolised by the capitalists, the workers' movement came to share the expansionist aims of the ruling classes and was swamped by nationalist ideology. In this sense, the Second International proved completely impotent in the face of the war, ceding its own aim to preserve peace.

Against this backdrop, it was Rosa Luxemburg and Vladimir Lenin who were two of the most vigorous opponents of the war. Articulate and principled, Luxemburg demonstrated how militarism was a key vertebra of the state and worked to make the “War on war!” slogan “the cornerstone of working-class politics”. As she wrote in *The Crisis of Social Democracy*, the Second International had imploded because it failed “to achieve a common tactic and action by the proletariat in all countries”. From then on, the “main goal” of the proletariat should therefore be “fighting imperialism and preventing wars, in peace as in war”. In *Socialism and the War*—among other writings penned during the First World War, Lenin’s great merit was to identify two fundamental questions. The first concerned the “historical falsification” at work whenever the bourgeoisie tried to attribute a “progressive sense of national liberation” to what were in reality wars of “plunder”. The second was the masking of contradictions by the social reformists who had replaced the class struggle with a claim on “morsels of the profits obtained by their national bourgeoisie through the looting of other countries”. The most celebrated thesis of this pamphlet—that revolutionaries should seek to “turn imperialist war into civil war”—implied that those who really wanted a “lasting democratic peace” had to wage “civil war against their governments and the bourgeoisie”. Lenin was convinced of what history would later show to be inaccurate: that any class struggle consistently waged in time of war would “inevitably” create a revolutionary spirit among the masses.

Lines of Demarcation

The First World War produced divisions not only in the Second International but also in the anarchist movement. In an article published shortly after the outbreak of the conflict, Pëtr Kropotkin wrote that “the task of any person holding dear the idea of human progress is to squash the German invasion in Western Europe”. In a reply to Kropotkin, the Italian anarchist Enrico Malatesta argued that although he was not a pacifist and thought it legitimate to take up arms in a war of liberation, the world war was not—as bourgeois propaganda asserted—a struggle “for the general good against the common enemy” of democracy, but yet another example of the ruling-class subjugation of the working masses. He was aware that “a German victory would certainly spell the triumph of militarism, but also that a triumph for the Allies would mean Russian-British domination in Europe and Asia”. In the *Manifesto of the Sixteen*, Kropotkin upheld the need “to resist an aggressor who represents the destruction of all our hopes of liberation”. Victory for the Triple Entente against Germany would be the lesser evil and do less to undermine the existing liberties. On the other side, Malatesta and his fellow signatories of *The Anarchist International Anti-War Manifesto* declared: “No distinction is possible between offensive and defensive wars”. Moreover, they added that “None of the belligerents has any right to lay claim to civilisation, just as none of them is entitled to claim legitimate self-defence”. For Malatesta, Emma Goldman, Ferdinand Nieuwenhuis and the great majority of the anarchist movement, the First World War was a further episode in the conflict among capitalists of various imperialist powers, which was being waged at the expense of the

working class. With no ifs or buts, they stuck with the slogan “no man and no penny for the army”, firmly rejecting even indirect support for the pursuit of war.

Attitudes to the war also aroused debate in the feminist movement. The need for women to replace conscripted men in jobs for a much lower wage, in conditions of overexploitation encouraged the support for war in a sizeable part of the new-born suffragette movement. Some of its leaders went so far as to petition for laws allowing the enlistment of women in the armed forces. Yet more radical, anti-war elements persisted. Communist feminists worked to expose duplicitous governments, which were using the war to roll back fundamental social reforms. Clara Zetkin, Alexandra Kollontai, Sylvia Pankhurst and, of course, Rosa Luxemburg were among the first to embark lucidly and courageously on the path that would show successive generations how the struggle against militarism was essential to the struggle against patriarchy. Later, the rejection of war became a distinctive part of International Women’s Day, and opposition to war budgets on the outbreak of any new conflict featured prominently in many platforms of the international feminist movement.

With the rise of fascism and the outbreak of the Second World War, violence escalated still further. After Hitler’s troops attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, the Great Patriotic War that ended with the defeat of Nazism became such a central element in Russian national unity that it survived the fall of the Berlin Wall and has lasted until our own days. With the post-war division of the world into two blocs, Joseph Stalin taught that the main task of the international Communist movement was to safeguard the Soviet Union. The creation of a buffer zone of eight countries in Eastern Europe was a central pillar of this policy. From 1961, under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Union began a new political course that came to be known as “peaceful coexistence”. However, this attempt at constructive cooperation was geared only to the USA, not the countries of “actually existing socialism”.

In 1956, the Soviet Union had already brutally crushed the Hungarian Revolution. Similar events took place in 1968 in Czechoslovakia. Faced with demands for democratisation during the “Prague Spring”, the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided unanimously to send in half a million soldiers and thousands of tanks. Leonid Brezhnev explained the action by referring to what he called the “limited sovereignty” of Warsaw Pact countries: “When forces that are hostile to socialism try to turn the development of some socialist country towards capitalism, it becomes not only a problem of the country concerned, but a common problem and concern of all socialist countries.” According to this anti-democratic logic, the definition of what was and was not “socialism” naturally fell to the arbitrary decision of the Soviet leaders.

With the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the Red Army again became a major instrument of Moscow’s foreign policy, which continued to claim the right to intervene in what it described as its own “security zone”. These military interventions not only worked against a general arms reduction but served to discredit and globally weaken socialism. The Soviet Union was

increasingly seen as an imperial power acting in ways not unlike those of the United States, which, since the onset of the Cold War, had more or less secretly backed coups d'état and helped to overthrow democratically elected governments in more than 20 countries around the world.

To Be on The Left is To Be Against War

With the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the left is once again confronted with the question of how to position itself when a country's sovereignty is under attack. It is a mistake for governments like Venezuela's to refuse condemnation of the invasion. This will make denunciations of possible future acts of aggression by the US appear less credible. We might recall Lenin's words in *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*: "The fact that the struggle for national liberation against one imperialist power may, under certain circumstances, be utilised by another 'Great' Power in its equally imperialist interests should have no more weight in inducing Social Democracy to renounce its recognition of the right of nations to self-determination". The left has historically supported the principle of national self-determination and defended the right of individual states to establish their frontiers on the basis of the express will of the population. Making direct reference to Ukraine, in *Results of the Discussion on Self-Determination*, Lenin argued that: "If the socialist revolution were to be victorious in Petrograd, Berlin and Warsaw, the Polish socialist government, like the Russian and German socialist governments, would renounce the 'forcible retention' of, say, the Ukrainians within the frontiers of the Polish state". Why suggest, then, that anything different should be conceded to the nationalist government led by Vladimir Putin?

On the other hand, all too many on the left have yielded to the temptation to become—directly or indirectly—co-belligerents, fuelling a new *union sacrée*. Such a position today serves increasingly to blur the distinction between Atlanticism and Pacifism. History shows that when they do not oppose war, progressive forces lose an essential part of their reason for existence and end up swallowing the ideology of the opposite camp. This happens whenever parties of the left make their presence in government the essential element of their political action—as the Italian Communists did in supporting the NATO interventions in Kosovo and Afghanistan, or today's significant part of Unidas Podemos, which joins its voice to the unanimous chorus of the entire Spanish parliament in favour of sending weapons to the Ukrainian army.

Bonaparte is Not Democracy

Reflecting on the Crimean War, in 1854, Marx opposed liberal democrats who exalted the anti-Russian coalition:

It is a mistake to describe the war against Russia as a war between liberty and despotism. Apart from the fact that if such be the case, liberty would be for the nonce represented by a Bonaparte, the whole avowed object of the war

is the maintenance[...] of the Vienna treaties—those very treaties which annul the liberty and independence of nations.

If we replace Bonaparte with the US and the Vienna treaties with NATO, these observations seem to be relevant even today. In today's discourse, those who oppose both Russian and Ukrainian nationalism, as well as the expansion of NATO, are often accused of political indecision or simple naivety. But this is not the case. The position of those who propose a policy of non-alignment is the most effective way of ending the war as soon as possible and ensuring the smallest number of victims. It is necessary to pursue ceaseless diplomatic activity based on two firm points—de-escalation and the neutrality of independent Ukraine. Furthermore, although support for NATO across Europe appears strengthened since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is necessary to work harder to ensure that public opinion does not see the largest and most aggressive war machine in the world—NATO—as the solution to the problems of global security. It must be shown that it is a dangerous and ineffectual organisation, which, in its drive for expansion and unipolar domination, serves to fuel tensions leading to war in the world.

For the left, war cannot be “the continuation of politics by other means”, to quote Clausewitz's famous dictum. In reality, it merely certifies the failure of politics. If the left wishes to return hegemonic and to show itself capable of using its history for the tasks of today, it needs to write indelibly the phrases “anti-militarism” and “No to war!” on its banners.

Our Right to be Neutral

Ranabir Samaddar

The Ukraine-Russia war has started a potent dialogue on the future of the transnational politics of peace and its processes. Though it is essentially a European war, it has enormous global ramifications, and it will make changes in the future flows of globalisation. This is why the politics of peace is transnational. Such politics creates a transnational space for discussion and organisation to oppose the war. It is a practice that aims at crafting peace politics against neoliberal strategies of stoking wars. The Ukraine conflict presses the urgency for a critical outlook to design a politics of peace in the neoliberal time, which has seen new wars with global implications—distinct from the two “world wars” of the past century. War remains a post-colonial reality. Great powers demand that every European war, indeed any war fought by them, has to be owned up by the postcolonial world. The right to be neutral assumes significant in this context. The first step towards crafting a new politics of peace is taken with declaring the right of the postcolonial world to be neutral.

Recall Julius Nyerere's comment as the metamorphosis of current political, “When the elephants fight, the grasshoppers die; when the elephants make love the grasshoppers die”. Transnational politics of peace cannot be a seamless idea of politics. It has to recognise the fault lines within “peace politics”, the contentious nature of the peace question today. Thus, what does

a European war mean for non-Europeans? What about the right to remain neutral, not to take sides in a war? Is this not the historic right of smaller nations, and smaller peoples to remain non-aligned? This is what the decolonised countries of the world in the 50s to 70s in the last century had proclaimed in the context of the Cold War when the West led by the US put the demand on the rest of the world that the latter has to take sides. In the neoliberal time, there is often no “just war”, and nations of the South can be only on the side of peace. To craft peace politics in such a contingent situation, the first requirement is to refuse to take sides and resist the pressure to take a side. The politics of peace of the Global South must first declare itself against the Western politics of transnational, transcontinental military alliances and security apparatuses. We have to think of these—that is to say, learn to appreciate and include non-European ways of looking at the questions of war and peace, if we seriously want to work on transnational politics of peace. Hence, the silence of the Global South on the Ukraine conflict is significant. The silence has its own history and the significance cannot be ignored.

Is anything western necessarily global? A conflict in the West is not necessarily a global conflict. Indeed, there are greater possibilities of reconciliation and resolution of such conflicts if kept local. Thus, if the US keeps its hands away from Europe, there is a greater possibility of a European resolution of the problem. If a large section of the world says we have nothing to do with this war, we should welcome it. Not everything in the world has to be globalised. The West does not take sides when, for example, two countries of sub-Saharan Africa or two countries of Asia go to war. They instead choose to become referees. They moralise instead of helping reconciliation and peace. Today, there is a new meaning to being non-aligned, to claiming neutrality. There is a new connotation and context to invoking the past of the Non-aligned Movement. One might recall the Non-aligned Movement led by Tito, Nasser, Nehru, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Sukarno and others, which enabled the Global South to refuse to be a party to the geopolitical game of the big powers.

Though we often categorise conflicts and wars as good or bad, a more pertinent question to ask would be about Europe and the US taking a moralistic view of the war in Ukraine. Unilateral sanctions by the West have made the economy a part of warfare. And then a moralist accusation is put forward that Russia is endangering the life of the common Ukrainians. Yet, western sanctions also impoverish the common Russian as in the past they had impoverished the common Iranian, or the common Iraqi with the oil embargo, or North Korea. Sanctions weaponise the life conditions of common people, hence they are extremely discriminatory. Refugee protection policies too have been weaponised. Humanitarianism itself has been weaponised. The idea that the Global South does not understand the moral core of the politics of sanctions is like the old colonial thinking that the rulers know much better than the ruled. The sanctions regime brings out the harsher, coercive face of globalisation. Ironically, however, sanctions may produce unintended consequences. For instance, sanctions may hasten the

way to multiple currency regimes. Recall, in the 70s of the last century, India and the USSR, had a Rupee-Rouble agreement in bilateral trade.

Today, geopolitics increasingly looks like what it was in the second half of the nineteenth century—refashioning the balance of power. In the multipolar geopolitical scenario, one cannot claim that “ganging up” will not happen while big powers pursue their own interests. The US is trying to bypass what one may call “old Europe” in pursuit of control over “new Europe”, which is Eastern Europe. The British exited Western Europe, following the American road, but at the same time trying to build new bridges with Eastern Europe. Western Europe is unable to strike out on its own; it is unable to emerge as an autonomous power, and it cannot do so unless it is a military power. This is the new reality in which the financial power of the West plays a central role. United States and the European states are trying to present themselves as the champions of democratic internationalism against the advance of Putin's authoritarianism. The violence of the European border regime is no longer hidden or only selectively applied against the refugees and migrants. The violence is now out in the open while neoliberal capitalism with its devastating effects especially in Central and Eastern Europe results in new militarism in the region. The appeal of Western governments to democratic values far from indicating a commitment to the enlargement of social or civil rights is merely functional to the hardening of a war front. In this background, transnational politics of peace cannot be limited to a routine call for democracy and social rights. The challenge is: how can we articulate a politics of peace that takes into account these contradictions within and beyond the war?

The history of responsibility is discriminatory, and nations of the Global South are well aware of this. To think from the perspective of the South means to think from the margins, to step outside of the circles of power and interrogate what is being presented as the truth. If the Global South thinks in a “selfish” way in the Ukrainian conflict, as it is made out by the West, might not one also ask whether Western Europe is not also thinking of the South in a “selfish” manner? The Global South can and should refuse to be a part of the global power game. In this context, we have to take note of the double nature of the national question today. The national question is far from being over in Europe. In the name of an elusive agenda of social and civil rights, the New Left in these countries has sacrificed the nation's right to fight for its people and handed over the flag of national resistance to domination and imperialism to the right. The radical theory and politics of “enlargement of social and civil rights” as the fulcrum of an agenda of social transformation has proved to be a cog in the wheel of the neoliberal corporate machine and the last 30 years of European enlargement have shown that. The so-called enlargement of social and civil rights cannot prevent the enlargement of the military machine. The growth of NATO and the so-called extension of social and civil rights have gone together. In near future, the reality of globalisation will be even starker. In a way, it is good because we became accustomed to treating globalisation in a centralist model but the one world through the Euro-American model of globalisation is over. Nations, peoples

and countries will claim the right to globalise in their own ways and that will soon require a global dialogic order perhaps in the style of the “daily plebiscite” of the ancient time.

In other words, transnational politics of peace cannot forget the reality of war and assume that it will be still a politics of peace. Peace demands today the security of nations, new principles of peaceful co-existence, shunning of military alliances and dialogic justice. Expansion of social and civil rights will be embedded in this context. Undermining of security of nations in the neoliberal time will lead to hydra-headed wars. Therefore, we must be honest. Did the world respond with the same urgency to the crisis in Afghanistan, the Saudi bombing in Yemen, or the NATO bombing of Libya? We have to formulate the principles of dialogic peace and fight in this background of the existing fault lines in a protection regime. War is a reality in the history of social transformation. Politics of peace gains its salience because it acknowledges this reality and develops on the basis of the contradictions within this scenario of war. Transnational solidarity will be embedded in such contentious social realities which include the reality of war.

The politics of social transformation is based on an acknowledgment of the contentious realities of our time and the need to “bend the reality” to the goal of transformation. A transnational politics of peace has to advocate justice at all levels. Only with the historic recognition of the fault lines in the existing security framework that came in the wake of 1989 in Europe and elsewhere with new coercive trade and financial rules in place that we can take steps towards creating peaceful conditions for real enjoyment of civil and social rights. It must uphold principles of dialogue over coercion and war—not selectively, but universally.

The Report is based on CRG discussion on ‘As the West Goes to War, Crafting Peace Question Today’, April 5, 2022. The panelists were Sandro Mezzadra, Ranabir Samaddar, Marcello Musto and Paula Banerjee. The Report is not an exact transcript. The digital recording is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNFgljXG_8&t=5s.

Report

Ukraine War Refugees and Human Rights in a Global Context

By

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The massive displacement the Ukraine War unleashed had its effects within a global context. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is often seen as pivotal in terms of its impact on the global order of power, Europe's understanding of itself and its future, and on the location of Russia, among others. Since World War II, the unprecedented displacement that this war unleashed in Europe means that we must situate it within a global context and address the possible transformations they indicate for the future. Ukrainians fleeing the war are called refugees in our daily languages, but they are not officially recognized as refugees and instead have temporary protection status. This status allows Ukrainians to enter European Union (EU) Member States and access rights, the labour market, education, health, etc. Although temporary protection is a double-edged sword and comes with its restrictions, this status raised

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questions in the public debate and scholarship about the 'unequal/special treatment' of displaced groups. The debates considered the temporary protection status awarded to Ukrainians in contrast to the restricted border regimes many other recently forcefully displaced groups faced in Europe, such as those fleeing from the wars in Afghanistan and Syria. Such comparisons about the status of the displaced tend to underline the 'unique' or 'singular' aspects of this displacement and emplacement of Ukrainian refugees and this war.

Q. Ayşe Çağlar: Where do we locate the commonalities between those groups displaced from Ukraine and those displaced in other parts of the world? How do we see any transformation in border and humanitarian regimes and their management for and of the displaced? Is there anything new on that front? And if there is a transformation in the making, what today can be viewed as a hint toward the future?

A. Alex Alenikoff: It is essential to examine how the Ukrainian situation may affect and transform the global refugee regime. We are seeing mixed signals around the world. More than six million Ukrainians have been welcomed in Europe, and at the same time that the United Kingdom is trying to send asylum seekers to Rwanda; in the United States, President Biden has reversed Donald Trump's dramatic cut in refugee admissions but has kept in place the so-called Title 42 regulations that permit the summary expulsion of anybody arriving in the border—nominally in the name of protection against Covid but in reality to stem the flow of asylum-seekers to the south-west border. So too, we see billions of dollars being raised for humanitarian relief in Ukraine while other significant and long-standing displacement situations are underfunded or ignored. Globally, the number of persons displaced within and outside their countries of origin now exceeds one hundred million. So, how does Ukraine fit into this scenario? In some ways, the Ukraine situation shows the one significant way the refugee regime works well: it provides initial safety to those who flee their homes across an international border. We tend to focus on the disparate treatment afforded Afghans and Ukrainians in the EU, but if we look from a different perspective, the international refugee regime does respond pretty well to flight across borders to countries of first asylum. So, Syrians were provided safety in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey; thousands of Rohingyas were permitted to enter Bangladesh. In the same way, the Ukrainians could go to Poland and other European states. The difficulty for the Global North and the EU is the secondary flow from countries of first asylum. There were very few Syrians who fled directly from Syria to the EU. They had spent three or four years in neighboring states of Syria; eventually, they used up their resources and were not locally integrated in a formal sense, so they began to look for other places to go.

There have been innovations in the Ukrainian response, some of which may carry forward. Let me mention first, the role of private sponsorship. Typically, the resettlement of refugees has been a state-run function. For some years now, Canada has been using a form of private sponsorship where groups of Canadians can sponsor refugee admissions.

What we have now seen in the EU context is a massive role of private sponsorship and assistance. Ukrainians were not put into refugee camps; there were some reception centres where people stayed for a few days or a week or two until they could go elsewhere. But most found shelter and support from private persons and groups. Similarly, in the United States, tens of thousands of Afghans—“paroled” into the US—were welcomed by private families. The State Department will also formalize private sponsorship of refugees this year.

The second important development is increased mobility for refugees. Under the temporary protection directive, Ukrainians can choose the country where they will be granted temporary protection. Furthermore, the EU states have waived the requirement that persons remain in those states. So Ukrainians are generally able to move into the EU, which is quite a different policy than is established for other refugee groups in Europe and around the world. As is well known, most refugees remain trapped in countries of first asylum—a situation I have called the phenomenon of “the second in exile.” They find themselves stuck because they can’t go home (because the conflict has not ended); they are not permitted to be locally integrated into the economy and society of the hosting state, and very few resettlement spots exist. So, I have argued for a while now that enhancing mobility for refugees should be a goal of the system—enabling them to travel to places where they can take care of themselves, start their lives over, be reunited with family, and go to school. I don’t think you will see it globally, but it could develop regionally, as has appeared to happen in the EU vis-à-vis Ukrainians.

Now a word on the relationship between human rights and refugee law. They exist side by side, overlap, and are concerned with similar issues, but they have different norms and structures for their enforcement. Scholars have attempted to morph refugee law into applied human rights law. It hasn’t been fully adopted, and I don’t think it will be entirely successful. Nonetheless, we need to adopt a broader conception of “people of concern”—to consider all aspects of displacement—and to move beyond the definition of refugee available in the 1951 Convention. One route would be to consider whether there is a human right to stay home that may be violated when conflicts, violence, climate change, and other environmental events cause the flight. Also, is there a human right not to be returned to danger? This is the principle of *non-refoulement*, so crucial to refugee law. But it applies in refugee law only if you can show you are a refugee—that is if you can show a well-founded fear of persecution on one of five particular grounds. The norm of *non-refoulement* doesn’t protect people being forced from their homes due to human rights abuses or the effects of climate change. And might we be able to develop a human right to the mobility I have just described? These changes will come through applying a broader notion of human rights law. Obviously, this is not the ideal time to suggest identifying new human rights. Because the Ukraine War is a classic refugee situation, with an invading country forcing people out of their homes, it doesn’t give rise to discussions of these expansions of human rights law—although it may help to transform the refugee regime in the ways I mentioned.

Q. Ayşe Çağlar: By adopting a common legal framework (temporary protection) and allowing Ukrainians fleeing Ukraine to cross EU national borders, the EU had shown a very coordinated performance, especially if we compare it to the reactions during the 2015 “refugee crisis”. What kind of light does the Ukraine War shed on the changing nature of borders within the EU, within Europe, but also elsewhere? Cultural narratives had been evoked in various ways about the displaced, their differentiated inclusions, and humanitarianism, but also in framing the exclusions. As someone who had worked on the post-Second World War narratives, how do you locate those, if you wish to say, ‘cultural civilizational narratives’ that surface through the war, and how does the 2015 “refugee crisis” figure in these narratives and imaginaries? Is there anything new about the unequal treatment of different displaced groups?

A. Randall Hansen: I will take these questions in reverse order. On differential treatment, the response that you have seen on Twitter and in the press suggests that there is something fundamentally different about the Ukrainian refugee crisis; this reaction, it seems to me, is entirely wrong. To paraphrase Erich Remarque, there is nothing new in the West. The current refugee crisis in Europe is like most crises we have experienced. Everywhere, the vast majority of refugees flee not persecution of the sort scene in the 1930s (when, for instance, a German-Jewish Professor was fired for being Jewish) but instead invading armies. This is precisely what is happening in Europe. What Slovakia, Poland, and Romania did (for Ukrainians) was exactly what Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey did (for Syrians). It's what every country does. When a contiguous country is a massive refugee-producing country and refugees are coming to you *en masse*, you have two choices—you open the border, or you open fire. Almost every country opens its border.

But borders do matter. At the moment, we have, on the one hand, a massive reconfiguration of borders in the sense that Russia unilaterally violated the border for the first time since 1945 by attempting to change the border through force. At the same time, in the face of massive refugee flows, most European countries have opened their borders—that is, suspended borders altogether. On the other hand, we are fighting this war for many reasons, but one is maintaining the sanctity of the Ukraine-Russia border. So, there is a complex process of collapsing yet reinforcing borders.

Let me make a final comment on civilizational discourse. The most obvious way this is emerging is concerning the enemy—Russia. There is a great tendency among commentators to essentialize Russia as inherently imperialist, inherently expansionist, inherently eliminationist, inherently murderous, and so on. It is exactly what we heard before in the 1930s and 1940s about the Germans.

Parochially, the response among faculty in the European Centre, which I have just stopped directing, was to call for an end to all cooperation with Russia and Russians. As ever, in the case of academic boycotts, I was opposed because the last thing we should do is stop talking to our colleagues.

Q. Ayşe Çağlar: There is an emphasis placed on the cultural and religious characteristics of the people fleeing wars in public debates on the reasons behind their 'special treatment' in the European countries they take refuge. How do these narratives affect the regulation of borders? With the differential treatment of the displaced at the borders, the Polish border plays a specific role in these discussions. It remains open for the displaced Ukrainians, but thousands of those displaced from Syria and Afghanistan and fleeing from war elsewhere are stuck at the Belarus-Polish border. So, how has this simultaneous openness and closure of the borders to the forcefully displaced enacted in laws? Where do you see such detentions being anchored in the laws? How do those borders figure for the displaced non-Ukrainian citizens from Ukraine, the Third Country nationals fleeing from Ukraine? Many NGOs are working on the borders assisting the displaced. What does this contradictory working of the Polish border mean for the NGOs working for the displaced? What do these border asymmetries mean for the NGOs involved in providing aid and assistance to the displaced?

A: Grażyna Baranowska: Firstly, I would like to point out one uniqueness of the Ukrainian situation, probably more of an EU uniqueness. Secondly, I will situate the Ukrainian refugee situation against the humanitarian crisis on the Belarus-EU border. But before I do that, let me quickly respond to your question on NGOs operating at the Polish eastern border. Poland has a 500kms long border with Ukraine and 400kms with Belarus, both of which have been in the light of attention for the last year. At both borders people are trying to enter Poland to seek refuge, but—as we know—only at the Ukrainian border is this efficiently and safely done. NGOs and volunteers are operating to help people at the borders, but they are intimidated and not allowed to help at the Belarusian border while cherished for the work they have been doing at the Ukrainian border. Criminal charges have been brought against people helping at the Belarusian border. It is often the same NGOs operating at both borders and now moving on from this to the one uniqueness of the situation. The Ukrainians fleeing the war could quickly enter the EU because they did not have to apply for a visa. This possibility to travel visa-free to the EU was introduced in 2017. It did not start with the Ukraine War. That gave the EU a different perspective because, in other contexts, the major challenge of refugee seekers is to reach the EU safely, as they cannot obtain a visa to do so. There are even countries where the acceptance rate of refugee applications is exceptionally high, but they have virtually no way to enter the EU regularly, for example, Eritrea. So, the only way for them to reach the EU safely is to engage themselves in life-threatening situations and take perilous routes. But once they reach the EU, they have safety and support. This is not the case for Ukrainians because they could enter the EU without applying for a visa. Consequently, what the EU was deciding upon after February 24, 2022, was not whether or not to make it possible for people to cross the border, but what to do once they have

entered. What I wish this situation would trigger in the European context would be a discussion about extending visa-free traveling to the EU. This would establish better and safer ways to respond to the crisis. Secondly, discuss that fleeing war or persecution does not have to be life-threatening. We need to repeat that because people are not dying when fleeing war in Ukraine, which should hold true for those fleeing from other countries as well, but it doesn't. So, this brings me to compare the situations at the two Polish borders—Ukraine and Belarus. I think Poland is an interesting case study because, in 2015, Poland was at the forefront of the EU countries opposing refugees and their relocation. The events taking place since 2021, which I call the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border, were initiated by the Lukashenko regime that brought people to and through the border. The humanitarian crisis was also triggered by the response of the Polish state, which was to push those people back to Belarus. Under domestic and international laws, this should not have happened. Their claims and needs should have been assessed once they were in Poland. That should have happened, but it did not. The practice on the ground pushed them back, and it was grounded in the domestic laws within a couple of weeks. Other laws were also adopted very quickly. For example, a state of emergency denied journalists and humanitarian help to enter the area. While the legal response to the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border was concentrated on denying them service, just a couple of months later, the Polish state responded to people fleeing Ukraine by quickly adopting laws to support them. For example, they have the same health care same as Polish citizens, access to education, and access to childcare benefits. The situation of people fleeing Ukraine in Poland is substantially better than other refugees. The legal frameworks responding to people fleeing through the Belarus border and the war in Ukraine are in strong opposition. There is massive support for both of those two policies. Recently, I have found research by Krawatzek and Goldstein (*Poles in Times of Dramatic Change: Refugees, Identity and Social Engagement* (zois-berlin.de) showing that 50 per cent of young people Poles agree with the statement that Poland should take in as many people fleeing the Ukrainian War as necessary. In comparison, over 60 per cent of them argue that people stranded at the Polish-Belarusian border should not even be able to apply for asylum. This shows strong support concerning both the politics of Ukraine and the Polish-Belarusian border.

A. Randall Hansen: There is a logic to the claim that Ukrainians are being treated better than Syrians—the Ukrainians were welcomed in Poland, whereas Syrians were not. But let's remember that the *temporary protection* status the Ukrainians are receiving is less generous than the *refugee status* that the Syrians received. The Ukrainians got three years of temporary protection, *not* refugee status, which Germany, Sweden, and Austria chiefly accorded to 1.2 million Syrians.

Q. Ayşe Çağlar: These legal frameworks show the complexity concerning the Ukrainian refugees in Poland and that they are better off than other refugees in terms of their rights and benefits. Similarly, in many other places like Turkey, access to education, healthcare,

childcare, etc., is present, but there is no access to the refugee's rights to resettlement for those under temporary protection. This creates different kinds of tensions in the countries and not yet in Poland.

The distributive scheme often goes parallel with moral hierarchies and representations, as well as with the permeability of the EU border on constructions of distinction between deserving refugees and undeserving economic migrants. These juxtapositions are more complex in relation to the Ukrainians in Europe because Ukraine has a long history of out-migration, displacement, and exile. Since 1991, especially Ukrainian migrants have been going to different countries in Europe, working in the care sector and the service industries as labourers. How are these migrants anchored in the current narratives in terms of the assistance programmes vis-à-vis the currently displaced because the others were under the category of economic migrants, and some of them were undocumented, and now we have different groups of displaced Ukrainians in Europe? What happens to their access to rights concerning the newcomers? What happens to their status and access to rights? How did 'class' figure there? And finally, former migrants/refugees always provide critical networks to the newcomers in terms of reaching institutions, and knowledge, among others. Given that civilian and voluntary networks play a significant role in assisting the displaced, what kinds of collaborations, but also tensions do you see there?

A. Olena Fedyuk: I want to add a slightly different perspective to the original question of what is or might be different in terms of the practical situation that we see unfolding with the reception of people who flee the war in Ukraine. It is related to the vital role of various forms of labour migration from Ukraine. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the opening up of the Iron Curtain, we have had all possible forms of mobility for primarily economic reasons labeled as labour migration and are well-documented in numerous migration studies works. We had shuttle migration, short-term migration, and long-term migration. We had migration for settlement. We had wide variations in migration in terms of demographics too. We had a similar kind of variety in migration with regard to age and gender, even if differentiated by destination countries. For instance, we have quite unequal migratory flows from countries in terms of gender composition, like the southern European welfare-modeled countries relying heavily on female laborers in terms of reproducing their society through care work or domestic work. But overall, mobility was growing and maturing and developing complex transnational placemaking in the last 30 years with remarkably diverse local connections. All these flows are most often labeled as labour migration, driven purely by economic motivation, and one thing which is very often overlooked in this perspective is that this migration was happening in response to tremendous geo-political and political economy changes but also in response to changes in social structures, ideological and moral opinions and perceptions. In terms of ideologies, all these waves have

left Ukraine in its specific political-economic climate; these people have been taking their set of ideological visions about Ukraine and its future abroad with them. Thus besides sending their economic remittances back home, they have also been engaged back in Ukraine through some quiet direct political action. These processes and commitment are what I wanted to highlight here: many times, migration studies research agenda in connection with Ukrainian migration undermined and looked at various forms of transnational political participation of Ukrainian labour migrants. Even though we have extensive evidence of high political mobilization during all the periods of domestic crises, during the Orange Revolution, even irregular migrants from Ukraine were organising to help Ukrainian citizens abroad to participate in the voting and organising public protests in the squares of the receiving countries. We have seen this again during Maidan; tremendous mobilization around the Revolution of Dignity (again, pointing to political and ideological values) as in forming the local communities, influencing the local political opinion in the receiving countries through protests, information campaigns, but also massive support through donations, volunteering, direct support to the Ukrainian Army.

And this brings me to the current situation when the Russian war on Ukraine has further and drastically fragmented the experience of people fleeing this war. We must remember that people with different backgrounds have been displaced and set on the move. As with every form of mobility, we must not forget that first, people who could afford it started to move, and in this case, precisely the people who had the social capital and some network that guided their flight. Let's say this is not based on any numerical research but on my experience of volunteering for the first couple of months in Budapest. The most frequent phrase I had to translate for the people arriving at the train station was how to buy tickets for someplace else where they had some connections. Everyone in the first few months knew where they were going, and of course, if you look at the UNHCR numbers, the number of people who moved to different countries very often mirrored the previously established labour migration corridors. The tremendous role of these previously established labour migrants' networks and experience of political mobilisation and civic organisation played a crucial role in supporting this mobility. Europe and European states have opened their borders, and many local initiatives have provided initial relief from the humanitarian catastrophe of the war. But it is the already existing networks of labour migrants that have received the primary financial, social and emotional pressure in terms of receiving and integrating these people. So, through the several examples of the people I worked with and followed throughout the years of my research, I saw multiple repetitions of similar situations. To give it a simplified version, for example, I knew people who work in the care economy in Italy who financed the flee of their mother, daughter, and grandchildren to Italy. So now they have found them accommodation, have agreed with their employers to find a way to settle them. But on top of all that, they still have to work, and besides just being alone, they have to support another four people and those who have stayed back in Ukraine and could not be mobile. But they still need

support. Even before the war, such transnational support networks were often asymmetrical, as we know from the migration literature. Now they have received much more pressure. Curiously, the arrival of labour migrants' families and other dependents also revealed the real ugly face of the migration regimes, where workers could work so intensely only because their social and family reproduction was removed from them and carried out by their families back in Ukraine. All these workers, who until now seemed to be happy to take extra hours at work, or provide care to a family 24/7 in the receiving country, could not sustain these intense work regimes once they had their own families around. And the same thing happened here in Hungary, where many Ukrainians work through temporary work agencies in the factories: living in worker dorms taking 12-hour-long weekend shifts became unsustainable with the arrival of their families. The moment they received their families, they could not work so "diligently" anymore or found these regimes of intensive exploitation unsustainable with the life-work balance. Similarly, their wages, which allowed them to live and remit in the "labour migrant" mode, proved to be highly insufficient for sustaining a family on an income not based on extra shifts and working hours. Finally, from the legal perspective, people who arrived as labour migrants before February 2022 found themselves uncertain. Some of those people were using biometrical passports for seasonal work trips, and when that status expired, they found themselves in between statuses, unable to switch jobs, renew their permit, and, on top of it, now responsible for the well-being and integration of their newly arrived family members. Therefore, if we want to have a long-term perspective of the needs of the current refugees fleeing Ukraine, we also need to think about the better incorporation of people from the previous labour migration networks.

Conclusion

The Ukrainian War has a cohesive role for Europe and European Values. It is so often underlined that goes beyond cultural divides within. But also, one could see that it also broadens other divides between the Global North and Global South in terms of the reactions, in terms of insistence on keeping the right to be neutral vis-à-vis the economic war waged through coordinated sanctions. Nationalism and anti-colonial sentiments acquired prominence in the political debates.

The Report is a transcript of an online Round Table discussion organised by the Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna, on 'Ukrainian War, Refugees, and Human Rights in a Global Context' on July 6 2022, under its Europe-Asia Research Platform Forced Migration Program in collaboration with the Calcutta Research Group. The panelists were Alex Aleinikoff, Grażyna Baranowska, Olena Fedynuk, and Randall Hansen, and were moderated by Ayşe Çağlar. The discussion is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSO-ORDVrDA&t=3114s>

Report

Kolkata Declaration 2021: A Post-Colonial Engagement

By

Debasree Sarkar *

The immediacy of the political takeover of the Afghan government by the Taliban in August 2021, followed by images of Afghans thronging the airport, kids being handed over the barricades, and gradual closure of women's educational institutions in mass media, television, newspapers and social media, made it clear that people of the world, especially the neighbouring countries such as India, cannot avoid the responsibilities of humanitarian aid and of protection. The Afghan Crisis once again problematised the notion of providing global protection regimes to refugees and migrants. In the context of postcolonial reality of migration, such protection regimes need to be localised. In view of these concerns, in November 2021, the Calcutta Research Group (CRG) adopted the Kolkata Declaration 2021. This Declaration was an appeal to different international organisations like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and all other human rights and international humanitarian agencies towards ensuring the life and dignity of the asylum seekers from Afghanistan and their rights for safe passage; upholding the need for open borders in neighbouring countries and the prevention of forcible returns; assuring the recognition of the educational requirements of Afghan asylum seekers; and advocating the principles of non-intervention, national reconciliation, stability and economic development of the people in a sustainable manner. It also stressed on the need for non-securitising humanitarian assistance, especially with reference to victims of war, women and children.

The panel discussion on 'Kolkata Declaration 2021: A Post-Colonial Engagement' offered the platform to deliberate on transition and justice with

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the Afghan journalists in exile. The panellists were Paula Banerjee (University of Calcutta and CRG), Nasreen Chowdhury (University of Delhi and CRG), Samata Biswas (The Sanskrit College and University and CRG) and Liza Schuster (City, University of London). The panel was chaired by Samata Biswas. Liza Schuster flagged the precise disparity in refugee experiences and protection regimes, especially, as one compares the Afghan Crisis with the ongoing Ukraine-Russia War and refugee crisis in Europe.

As we all know, the 1990s was an extremely important decade in the development of EU asylum policy and directly relevant to what we are seeing today. That decade witnessed the development of the internal market in Europe in 1992 and the coming into force of the Schengen Agreements of 1995, leading to free movement within the EU for those who were legal residents, and the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia, which unleashed years of conflicts and created numerous displaced persons and refugees. These issues created a context for the Temporary Protection Directive (a European Union directive of 2001) but astonishingly, it was only in the immediate aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis that the directive was activated.

The events of 2015 with higher numbers of Syrian and Afghans in Europe provoked contradictory responses, which foreshadowed the events of the last nine months. The only positive response to the Syrian migrants in 2015 was that some were allowed entry via the European frontiers while other migrants like the Afghans, Yemenis and Ethiopians were forced to camp along fences in the open. It is astonishing that the Temporary Protection Directive, which was drafted specifically to handle this kind of a situation, was not activated. The tolerance towards the Syrians was short-lived. To reduce irregular migration into Europe in the absence of a regular route, the EU negotiated with Turkey, offering visas for Turkish citizens and assuring the progress of Turkey's accession to the EU in exchange of 3 billion (subsequently increased to 6 billion) Euros. In November 2015, a joint action plan came into force and the EU-Turkey deal was signed in March 2016. While it focused on preventing Syrian refugees from travelling to Europe, Afghans were also cowed down by the restrictions. In October 2016, in spite of the spike in civilian deaths, worsening conflict, drought and increased unemployment in Afghanistan, the EU forced the Afghan government to accept the Joint Way Forward (JWF) Agreement. The Afghan government reluctantly agreed to facilitate returns to and prevent irregular migration from Afghanistan.

In spite of the unstable political situation in 2021, caused by the anticipation of the complete withdrawal of the US troops announced by Donald Trump and confirmed by Joe Biden, the deal was renewed in April that year. Between 2015 and 2021, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) was roped in by the EU to support the Afghan government so that a comprehensive migration policy could be developed, the government's capacity to reintegrate those who returned created and irregular migration prevented. In 2019, the policy was presented to the president of Afghanistan. Owing to the absence of a budgeted action plan, it was not approved. The EU then engaged IBF, a consultancy firm, to work on its state

and resilience-building contract. If the Afghan government fulfilled a number of tasks, it would gain access to 100 million Euros. Most of the tasks had to do with setting up taxation systems; one key performance indicator was to prepare an action plan for the implementation of the comprehensive migration policy. In June 2021, 26 out of 34 provinces were in a tense situation.

Liza Schuster was asked to be one of the technical advisors to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation. Days after the US troops had withdrawn from their base in Bagram (a town in Afghanistan) and the UK had retreated most of their troops as well amidst the ongoing attacks on Kabul, Schuster arrived in Kabul. Based in the Office of the Director of Policy and Planning, she met the officials of the Ministry of Finance, Interior Justice and Labour as the Taliban advanced. They discussed about the actions necessary to implement the policy goals for which those ministries were responsible. Increasingly, civil society organisations in Europe were demanding an end to enforced return; finally, in August, some countries announced that they would cease deportation, but not all. Six EU states—Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands—wanted to continue deporting and, on August 10, wrote to the EU Commissioner Ylva Johansson that stopping returns sent the wrong signal and probably would motivate even more Afghan citizens to leave their homes for the EU. At that stage, the Taliban had already taken control of most provinces and two major cities. Evacuation of foreign nationals began as it was clear that the government would fall. The work Schuster and her team were doing was stopped and she was escorted to the secured compound of the airport, while the people she had been working with for the last four weeks were left behind.

Having spent years pressurising the Afghan government to stop immigration, the EU, within days, appeared to take a sharp u-turn, telling the new Taliban government that it would be judged on the basis of its response towards those who wished to leave Afghanistan. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Afghan government and in sharp contrast to the situation till July, the representatives of national governments inside the airport and managing the evacuation process, temporarily suspended granting visas and passports for those who were trying to leave the country. The response from the EU was unsatisfactory to say the least as they expressed their inability to help.

Evacuations ended on 31 August effectively. The calls and emails pleading for help continue. Former colleagues are still trapped in Afghanistan, without work and income, dependent on the money sent from abroad for food and fuel. Many of them send emails expressing their fear of persecution. Apart from that very small window, 2021 and 2022 have seen Afghans imprisoned more effectively than ever before within their borders, by the reluctance of other states to offer them refuge. A very small number of people have been evacuated to Europe and US and many more still wait for their chance. “Policies should never be made by those who do not have to live with

their consequences,” remarked Schuster referring to how EU had tried to impose its policy goals without understanding the reality on the ground.

The treatment received by the Ukrainian refugees in Europe has been different from the experiences of refugees from other countries, namely the Syrian or Afghan refugees. Russia invaded Ukraine on February 2022, and in March 2022, the Temporary Protection Directive (a European Union directive of 2001) was activated granting Ukrainian refugees residency, access to housing, social welfare assistance, medical care, legal guardianship for unaccompanied children and teenagers, access to education to the children and teenagers, approach to the labour market, admission to banking services, freedom to move to another EU country and within the EU countries for 90 days within a 180-day period after the Residence Permit was issued. At the same time, transport providers offered free rides. Ukrainian refugees were offered free food and drink. Once the Syrians were welcomed in Europe, it was largely done by Syrians with hand-drawn signs.

Schuster specifically points out this hypocrisy of the policymakers and political leaders of European states. As for decades, demands of activists for more open, just and generous policies were dismissed as being idealistic, unrealistic, naïve. Yet, in the post-pandemic economy, despite a cost-of-living crisis and 6.5 million Ukrainians arriving in the EU in the first three months of the war, the EU has still managed to provide them with all the necessary rights. Though it is not clear how long this focused generosity will last, it demonstrates that numbers are not the issue. We make choices and they reflect particular political relationships and racist preferences, as evident from the welcome extended to Ukrainians and the comment made in February 2022—“they look just like us”.

Nasreen Chowdhory made her comments on the relevance of the Kolkata Declaration and the ongoing refugee crisis. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016) and the two Global Compacts linked the agenda of global protection of refugees and migrants with the global development agenda set by the United Nations. The Kolkata Declaration reflects on the slight difference between Global Compacts and the new global mandate on protection. First, there is a shift in the overall tone and tenure of protection from global to that of postcolonial. Second, it also accounted for a template of protection from global to local. Third, the reason for this structured protection forms the needs or rules of management of migration to that of postcolonial reality of mobility. In this context, the Kolkata Declaration was drafted, reflecting on the need of the time, especially the realities of postcolonial societies. So, to a large extent, it offered a strikingly fresh interpretation of two terms—‘protection’ and ‘global’. The two Global Compacts set a new international mandate of global protection. But what is so ‘global’ about the Global Compacts? Who does it attempt to protect and from whom?

Refugees and migrants are considered an anomaly to the established order of sovereign states, largely based on the inviolability of borders. Even though sheltering and safeguarding the vulnerable became a temporary mandate in the refugee protection framework, it is somehow shadowed by the

binaries that accompany border politics and national security rhetoric of individual states. While taking into account the obligation of states to provide protection to refugees, these binaries tend to extend to inside-outside, self-other, citizen-refugee, which come into the forefront, causing the protection to be somewhat transmuted to what looks more like a punishment. The Eurocentric core of the discourse here unravels as a prevalent method of categorising people into neatly demarcated territorial groups that subscribe to the western epistemology of binary logic.

The context of the discourse on protection, in the case of forced migration, is cusped in these binaries causing two postulations. First, the contextual narrative of massive and mixed flows of population crossing the border and entering the sovereign territories of the state is perceived as a threat to the imagery of the nation, bounded by common cultural and historical memory. Second, the contextual narrative is the one that anchors the obligatory protection to the regime of charity which is extended by the host to the vulnerable and dispossessed, and eventually creates a victim image of the refugee subject. Refugees and forced migrants are considered anomalies to the established order of sovereign states. This is largely based on the way in which the border has been construed. Border, being the territorial demarcation of sovereignty, the crossing of the border invokes tension between the sovereign rights of the state and the international human rights norms. The rights of the refugee, if any, in practice, currently, stem from the whole context of human rights norms. This tension can be addressed through an understanding of the prevalence and ambivalence that primarily shaped the state's behaviour, especially in the manner in which the state structures and provides legal and moral rights to a person, thereby invoking the idea of somebody who is illegal, therefore, perhaps has no claim to any kind of protection.

The protection accorded to refugees in the host state, transmutes to one form of punishment, both metaphorically and literally. The very nature of humanitarian protection becomes one in which exclusion and dispossession, in the absence of rights and legal membership, provide them with the right to have rights. This can be attributed to the state's predetermined conditionality of formal or legal membership with the UNHCR, or any other socio-logical membership or individual membership. So, the precursor is citizenship. Citizenship, as the ultimate formal and legal status of membership within a state, was designated to be the realm of the state's sovereign demarcation amongst individuals within a territory. The protection accorded to a citizen is one that is backed by the legality of rights, emanating from a status. In other words, it tends to showcase a natural law superstructure that forces people to be bound by a perpetual allegiance towards a sovereign state into which the person is born.

A refugee, by definition, is transcending all of this. The international law, on which the edifice and the implementation of the enforcement of the protection regime rest, allocates this power on matters of nationality and citizenship to individual nation-states. This understanding of what can be considered as an assertion of a state's sovereignty also carries within it an

instrumental power of the state to strip people of their nationality, dispossess them of their rights and oust them from the ambit of the realm of protection. The forced migrants often leave their country due to the fear of persecution which means that a certain modicum of protection was not available to all. Hence, the discussion on the protection of refugees is very critical. Often, the role of international protection is presumed to make up for the failure of the state to protect the concerned person against the persecution feared. The core principle of refugee protection, therefore, hinges on people fleeing persecution and certain terms and conditions that constitute the very essence of the Refugee Convention. Persecution, therefore, is only one type of harm that may lead to forced migration. Refugee protection has been regarded by some scholars as a mechanism through which human rights violations can be redressed. However, the short-sighted definition of persecution actually leaves a large ambit of protection outside its realm. Nasreen Chowdhury tried to figure out the question of protection through the lens of segregation to the idea of mobility, how the acts of refugees are often construed to be criminal behaviour and how host states react accordingly.

Samata Biswas discussed the interrelationship between confinement as protection and confinement as punishment. Confinement means not allowing people to move. Since August 2021, the media images from Kabul were replete with pictures of high walls, human barriers and barbed wires on top of the walls, which Afghan men, women and children were regularly trying to breach, as also sights of people being pushed out from the compound with butts of rifles. This confinement is punishment that takes a national form when the borders are forcibly closed, restricting people from leaving their national borders, and, in some cases, they are not even allowed to enter certain places like the embassies when they were shut down as well. In Afghanistan, six people were murdered in a gurdwara because they had applied for asylum in India which does not have a protection regime for such refugees. Thus, Afghans suffering from religious persecution were unable to leave for other countries seeking asylum and were forced to stay in Afghanistan under the constant threat of persecution.

Paula Banerjee observed how in the last two years the world has witnessed the unfolding of two major refugee situations in the world—the Afghan and the Ukrainian situations. When the Ukraine-Russia War started, Europe openly welcomed the refugees within six or seven days. In the Global South refugee situations are more complex and common in occurrence. The refugee administration has mostly remained racist. If we look at the history of postcolonial South Asian statehood, we will see that this history is shrouded by colonial efforts to keep people circumscribed within their geographical periphery as citizens of these nations of the Global South. So, the refugee principle in itself is against the principle of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which clearly states that anyone can move and settle anywhere. It was against this backdrop that the Refugee Convention was created.

The Ukrainian situation further points out the humongous hypocrisy that guides refugee administration in Europe or in trans-Atlantic countries. As

the United States and Russia were responsible in the case of Afghanistan in creating refugees, in the same way, Europe and Russia have been players in creating refugees in Ukraine. Today, the Ukrainians may have been well accepted into European countries but refugee history has shown us that this can be a short-lived period of grace. The Kolkata Declaration of 2018 was a response to the Global Compact which posed a great panacea for converting refugee groups as objects to people who could be part of the developmental discourse.

But the refugee administration, through its incarceration of refugees and creation of refugee colonies which are very similar to penal colonies, aimed to produce a fresh group/generation of people who would be used to looking at themselves as an insecure lot on whom the notion of development rested, but who in turn are not made a part of the force gaining from the process. While citizens have the choice to be a part of this developmental process, refugees are forced to be in it as workers or in whichever way deemed right by the host states. The 2018 and the 2021 Declarations have revealed how critically the Global Compacts have failed, even though the Afghanistan situation was created after the formulation of the Global Compact. It failed to address the needs of the situation.

On the other hand, South Asia was born from a refugee situation where, even if estimated conservatively, there were 15 million refugees. If we look at either Palestine or India, we will be able to see that the refugee administration was created by denying refugee rights to more than 25 million people based in Asia itself. So, whether it's the Global Compact or any other refugee convention, all international treaties are based on a refugee model, which is very different from reality. So, even before discussing the refugee situation, the image of the refugee is decided. Such an image is created on the basis of a preconceived notion of the ones to be excluded from the rights of citizenship.

The Ukrainians did not fit that image; rather they did not have to do so, as the policies were welcoming to them because of their racial identity. But this special treatment is something that we have to be very careful about as today's new refugees will become tomorrow's protracted refugees, and tomorrow's protracted refugees will inevitably join the plights of the stateless. As racial exclusion worked very well for state formation, with the Ukrainian refugees it has become more complicated. But eventually, the states will find out a mechanism to exclude these people. The moment the Ukrainians become dispossessed, people who are offering seats in public places will be the first to question the limits of hospitality. Hence, it is important for the Ukrainian refugees, the Afghan refugees and the Syrian refugees to realise that the moment one becomes dispossessed, it is important to understand that refugeehood is built on exclusionary principles. So, unless the refugees create a movement, which still has not been created, one cannot rely upon the Global Compacts to address the issues of rights.

The Global Compacts are neither global in nature nor the claim to deliver protection is universal; rather they are skin deep in their bases on what would at times be called exclusion and at other times racism. The logic of the

state and the border in itself is based on an exclusionary premise. As the state takes more and more authoritarian and securitised steps, it creates its own new exclusions that it must strengthen in order to reinforce itself. Protection can indeed be thought of as punishment. The existing global regime is often run like forced immobility or forced mobility through confinement; such penal colony prototype settlements that characterise refugee camps all over the world.

The crucial question of the day is: what will happen to the refugees? Do we need to re-categorise the refugees with new connotations? Their transition from refugeehood to being citizens in a new host country has either been a delayed process or incomplete and has remained in limbo for long with an indefinite future. The numerous examples of such transitions are varied and spread across geographies. So, whether we take the example of the Partition refugees in India or the Biharis in Bangladesh, both becoming citizens without any rights, or millions of others living in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, such instances show that very few of the refugee population may well become citizens, transcending the exclusions; hence, exclusion is not based purely on nationality, ethnicity or race.

Exclusion works on vulnerability. Another myth that the First World does not produce refugees has been broken by the Ukrainian refugees. But what is concerning is that even though the Ukrainians are promised many things by the European states, these promises will be denied on other premises because their vulnerability will eventually make them the excluded category, where their rights will be abrogated by the host states. What may happen to these refugees after 10 years? Will they become stateless unless there is a concerted global movement against it? This will probably not happen because, for most states, it is essential to have refugees. They need a certain footloose population group without papers and international protection. For the state, it is essential to have them to form the new forays of development and to sort of harvest people to use them if not as slaves, then serfs, for their developmental purposes. The situation is different for the South Asian countries, where the states are not signatories to the 1951 Convention. These South Asian states, in a very limited sense, are accommodating refugees. But to what extent do the conditions of the asylum seekers or the refugees differ in the countries that are signatories of the Convention? Also, there are some people who are more desired as refugees than others. For example, a heteronormative family is more desired than a person non-confirming to traditional gender categories. Further, the question of integration and assimilation is an issue, as one needs a certain amount of cultural and financial capital to successfully integrate with the host society, which vulnerable populations do not possess.

The exploitation of the labour capital of the refugees and migrants has always been an integral part of migrant mobility. Although there have been suggestions to connect the refugees with international labour migrants and their struggles under the International Labour Organisation (ILO), how far such attempts can be fruitful to fight against exploitation and then fight for rights on those grounds, rather than on the grounds of human rights, which

are already racialised is difficult to ascertain. A huge number of the refugee population, at least two-thirds, belong to the working age. The problem is that the structures of ILO or UNHCR are such that none of these groups works comprehensively. These international agencies are formed in such a way that they become exclusionary. So, being inclusive goes against the entire principle of their superstructure. As for the theoretical approach, there has to be a synergy. Instead of looking towards these global organisations, we need to look for the people-based organisations who should take up the issues of refugees and protection. Even labour rights are also built on hypocrisy and exclusion. But, at least, it has been trying to access rights on the basis of productivity and justice. So, it has a better chance than humanitarian rights. But what can be the way of convincing the ILO which is very much part of the UN system and the UN system more of a problem than a problem solver?

The Kolkata Declaration of 2018 defines the migrant flows as mixed and massive pull of population; it is futile to distinguish between a refugee, a labour migrant and a forced migrant because their rights and requirements are more or less the same. CRG argued while internal migrant workers are being stripped of their rights, those inside the country, the de facto refugees, are shorn of their rights of citizenship. Workers' rights and refugee rights ought to go hand in hand. The problem also lies in how different institutions like the ILO adhere strictly to definitions and categories of identification. If one fails to adhere to these blurry categorisations, the question of accessibility and rights gets cancelled out. Hence, we need to transcend the hierarchical nature of rights and make rights more equal.

The panel discussion on 'Kolkata Declaration 2021: A Post-Colonial Engagement' was attended by Paula Banerjee, Nasreen Chowdhury, Samata Biswas, Liza Schuster, at the LASFM19: Global Issues, Regional Approaches, Universidade Catolica de Santos, August 5, 2022. It was based on the Resolution titled 'Kolkata Declaration on the Need for a Coherent Protection Policy and Justice for Refugees and Migrants of Afghanistan, 2021', taken by Calcutta Research Group during the Afghan Crisis of 2021. The Declaration can be read at:
http://www.mcrg.ac.in/RLS_Migration_2021/Kolkata_Appeal_Afghanistan-2021.pdf

Book Review

Arc of the Journeyman: A Humane Expedition to the Quotidian Lives of Afghan Migrants in England

By

Anshif Ali *

Arc of the Journeyman: Afghan Migrants in England, by Nichola Khan, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2020, pp. 288, INR 2,434; ISBN-13: 978-1517909628

Years of war and political turmoil in Afghanistan have engendered a massive exodus of natives who were forced to flee the predicaments of violence, death and scarcity that transformed them into one of the world's largest refugee groups. In different junctures of time, under different regimes, the Afghan population endured severe torture and consequentially millions had to seek asylum in countries like Pakistan, Iran and England. Despite a group that wrote one of the most poignant chapters in the history of displacement, the quotidian lives of Afghan migrants remain largely under-researched in the academia. This is further exacerbated by the literary and cultural productions of colonial ethnographers whose fixed gaze produces only stories of Anglo-Afghan relations narrated by travellers "who journeyed from the center of the British empire to its frontiers in Afghanistan" [p.12] and gets stuck in certain imperial binaries. These stereotypical projections and orientalist myths are consumed by many as reliable accounts due to the absence of a dependable alternative source. Nichola Khan's *Arc of the Journeyman*, an extensive ethnographic study based in Sussex, London and Peshawar, fills this lacuna in narrating Afghan migrants' lives and offers a humane portrayal of their struggles and survival in a foreign country. The fieldwork conducted between 2009 and 2017, along with its effective employment of social anthropology,

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mobilities research, the historiography of Anglo-Afghan relations, and the anthropology of migration from Afghanistan in research, takes the Pakhtun migrant taxi drivers as the core interlocutors. It also employs other qualitative methods like life-history work, dream sharing and historical, literary, poetic and imaginative research. Revealing the wider global networks created by the local circuits of taxi drivers, this book distinguishes itself in terms of being the first full-scale ethnography of Afghans in Britain.

The first chapter of the book, predicated on some of the anthropological writings on mobility, offers a fresh and unsettling depiction of the local and global forms of Afghan migration and attaches more importance to movement rather than the destination. Set in Sussex, it discusses the mobility and labour of the taxi drivers which, in a broader transnational context, is interconnected with their cultural practices and kinship relations. The taxi drivers began their journey after claiming asylum in the 1990s and 2000s as young men who, as directed mainly by their fathers who pay for their passage, were sent out to remit their families back in Afghanistan. Towards 2017, there were 150 men working as drivers in different sectors. The migratory process of these drivers, along with securing the visas or citizenship, normally follows an upgradation from illegal to low-paid workers, to citizens and hackney-carriage license holders. This upward mobility progressing normally up to gaining the capacity to settle one's family may take up to 10 years and entails considerable physical and mental exertion. The licensing process that includes memorising places and learning English often becomes a vexation for those who are ill trained in the language. Drivers encounter inequalities in terms of income and experience, which also are the bearers of critical discrepancies in matters related to citizenship, ethnic difference, class consciousness and social divisions [p.63]. Khan juxtaposes her inferences regarding the Afghan taxi drivers with prominent literature in the field which throws light on the stratifications among the driving mobility in different places like China, Vietnam and South Asia, at different times in history, and compares it with the former's customary and political practices.

Khan devotes the major part of Chapter One to delineate the effects remittance brings to those who send and receive the money. The major motive behind families sending their sons off to faraway lands is their expectations that the latter can maintain the financial stability of the household back in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which helps to mould their lives amidst the woes created by war and deprivation. This challenges the notion of freedom and individual mobility enjoyed by migrants in the destinations whereby they are forever burdened with the pure obligation to elder kinsmen and never receive any tangible returns. Remittance is a form of economic, familial and cultural activities which possesses material and non-material values. The former encompasses the values like control, familial loyalty, guilt, frustration and despair, and the latter the vehicles, gadgets and other goods consumed by the family and relatives. Not all migrants can remit the money their family demands and they will need to exert extra hardship to meet their responsibility. Failures in remittance may bring shame and free the father from his duties to the son's wife and children. Transferring the remittance is

often performed using the informal economy and *hawaldars* play a critical role in it. Remittance, thus, becomes an active force in creating a globally networked economic force that the taxi circuit in a limited locality makes possible. Often taxi drivers encounter painful depression and undergo other psychological conditions as the work pressure crumbles them even though they could only remit less. The accumulation of debt, sleep deprivation and a hopeless attitude towards life deteriorates their existence and brings forth suicidal tendencies. As Khan observes, the complex and dynamic stories of drivers “problematize schematic mappings of Afghan migration, revealing lines that do not necessarily follow prescribed directions, and circles that do not return people to the place they started” [p.76].

Calling attention to the Pakistan side of the transnational context of Pashtun migrants, Chapter Two takes the *chakar* (a pleasure trip undertaken mainly by male friends which includes food and other leisure) as an analytical lens to explore mobility in a broader theoretical fashion. The Afghan migrants, who return to visit their families, engage in *chakar* and create the space of liminality which involves an interplay between “anti-structure and emerging structure”. It dissolves existing order and formulates a new one, but only in an uncertain way that the return to the starting point is expected anytime. Participants are capable of influencing the social hierarchies of power and achieving moments of freedom, though permanent, from rules and everyday obligations amidst oppressive migrant realities. *Chakar* determines a migrant’s position among his community as it involves the exhibition of one’s status, masculinity, wealth and generosity through commensality and remittance. The food prepared for the picnic, as it is indicative of one’s piety and hospitality, is important in this. These visits also constitute the development of migrants’ transnational identities.

The third chapter, which I personally found most interesting, explores the immobility of migrants, that is caused by their failure to achieve the goals of stability and upward mobility, through its use of three interlocutory approaches: analysis of *Khapgan* (depression), doing four life-history interviews and interpretation of five dreams of one interlocutor. The necessity of remittance and sustaining a successful life will not be proportionate to everyone’s capabilities. Depressed by this carceral burden, some wish for “not moving” by resorting to sleep or bringing an end to life. The labourers are often tortured by hopelessness, worry, frustration, boredom, a desire not to think and an inability to move or work and this situation creates a sense of not belonging, of being unreal or a kind of estrangement in them [pp. 131-132]. Khan understands these conditions by applying dominant anthropological theories to the ethnographic context of the migrant population in Sussex, and also through subclinical and psychiatric methods. The immobility they achieve while sleeping and their dreams that employ the culturally influenced symbols and imagery, which reveal their unnarrated woes and sufferings, are well researched by the author.

The fourth chapter consists of a number of storied “fragments” from everyday life that Khan collected during her fieldwork in Sussex, London and Peshawar. They are helpful in developing an interconnected narrative of

"movement and migration, food and water, and terrestrial and aquatic crossings" [p.158]. Afghan migrants perform three types of interrelated crossings: as refugees fleeing to Pakistan from the war in Afghanistan, as British asylum seekers traversing land and sea, and as refugees to one's own land during the repatriation from Pakistan. Migrants, while in transit and after reaching a destination, have to grapple with smugglers, asylum bureaucracies, border policies, deportation and many mortal threats. Khan's is a humane depiction of the marginal transnational lives designed by global inequalities, fractures and liminality. Engaging with the work of Frederick Barth, Chapter Five is about Afghan Pashtun community organisations in Sussex. It narrates the extensive history and politics of Gulzai and Shinzada groups, two divisions of the city's Pashtuns organised around two families and deeply delves into the complexities concerning the collective mobilisation and immobility in the migrant cityscape.

This book is an outcome of Nichola Khan's daring effort to put forth an alternative portrayal of the lives of the Afghan population as a moving and contingent force against the stereotypical colonial narrations of Pashtun traditionalism and obscurantism. It presents migration as an ongoing process and observes mobility as the factor shaping the migrant subjectivities, thereby challenging the hegemonic representations. This book is a call for appreciating the migrant labourers' struggles while wrestling with life and sympathising with their sufferings.

Book Review

Surviving War: Past, Present and Imagined Futures

By

Anup Shekhar Chakraborty *

Modern Afghanistan: The Impact of 40 Years of War, edited by M. Nazif Shahrani, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018, pp. 456, USD 80; ISBN 978-025-30-2977-5 (Hardcover)

From 1978 to the present, the war in Afghanistan has become an accepted aspect of Afghan life. Since 2001, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, its military forces, NATO partners and various Afghan resistance organisations have continued armed struggle with the Taliban insurgency and their supporters. Despite shifting actors, ideologies, intensity, and duration, war remains apparent, including social and political dynamics, gender issues, and shifting relationships among tribal, sectarian and regional communities. Forty years of local, regional and global war, violence, and military intervention have left their mark on the lives and people of Afghanistan. These battles have taken place at all three levels. Notably, the United States' activities, worldwide, seek to examine inside out the damage caused by the protracted war in Afghanistan, intending to gradually resurrect a democratic government that is favourable to the terms and conditions established by the United States and its preferred allies. The cacophony of voices that echo the geopolitical regions of the Afghan world is summed up in Neil Young's 2006 anti-war protest song 'Living with War'—"I live with war every day; I live with the war in my heart every day; I am currently living with war".

How do four decades of war, brutality, and military intervention influence a nation and its citizens? The book, *Modern Afghanistan: The Impact of*

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40 Years of War (2018), edited by M. Nazif Shahrani, analyses the impact of Afghanistan's protracted war backwards and forwards. In 17 chapters, separated into four sections, as well as an opening chapter by the editor, the severity of the "War" and its impact on Afghanistan are painstakingly studied. An interdisciplinary group of scholars, many of whom have conducted extensive ethnographic field research in dangerous environments during ongoing violence and conflicts, have joined forces to investigate how the war in Afghanistan has affected the country's society, identity and political culture. This anthology contradicts the prevailing narratives of security, conflict and violence. Prevailing works have demonstrated the all-encompassing nature of war, tracing its effects not only on fighters and civilians, but also on diplomats and aid workers. Instead, this volume represents a *mélange* of collective engagements in war-ridden geographies: shifting moral masculinities and disability rights movements, organising anti-war programmes, popular education campaigns, social service delivery and initiatives to avoid loss and reestablish trust in a climate of the new political ecology of uncertainty.

Afghanistan is the only country in the world with the dubious distinction of having been invaded by all the three major powers—the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States—in the last 150 years. Nonetheless, all of these great powers have failed to tame and shape the country according to their ideological and geopolitical preferences. Despite their combined military and financial might, the Soviet Union and the United States were unable to control Afghanistan for more than a decade each. At the same time, even Britain managed only a much shorter period of direct rule (less than two years) in the nineteenth century. The United States and its allies withdrew most of their troops from Afghanistan at the end of 2014, leaving only limited contingents for the next two years, despite President Donald Trump's decision to increase the number of American troops, emphasising on 'killing terrorists' (p.21). Despite all the money, effort and time spent on nation-building in Afghanistan, the United States and its allies have failed to pacify the country.

Forty years of local, regional and global war, violence and military intervention have left their mark on the lives and people of Afghanistan. The book explores conflicting discourses on national identity, statehood and state stability in relation to power technologies in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's tumultuous transition from traditional Islam to extremism is deeply rooted in the ideology of the Taliban. Additionally, it investigates the four decades of military presence in Afghanistan from 1978 to 2016. In the wreckage of a violent past, the contributors shed new light on the lives of individuals seeking to construct a secure future. The chapters also claim that despite many years of development attempts and substantial international financial assistance, Afghanistan remains a complex nation rife with inequality. The chapters examine Afghanistan's language, poetry and identity from a broad perspective, pinpoint the poetic text and change in Afghanistan, and discuss Afghanistan's poetic tradition and decide where continuity and discontinuity exist. This book examines the merchant warlords who have acquired new forms of leadership in Afghanistan, as well as the dynamic political economy of the

country, by using the example of the changes that have occurred in Kabul and Afghan politics after the year 2001. In order to illustrate the New Political Ecology of Uncertainties at the Margins, the contributors have extensively researched the situation of the Bardakhshanis in Afghanistan since the Saur Revolution, as well as that of the Hazara Civil Society Activists and the Balochs.

This book makes an effort to investigate a number of different gendered realities, including trust deficits, discourses of self and other, and the dynamic interactions that exist between social orders and literary texts. The border and access to vital resources, as well as the challenges to state stability posed by strategic resource access in Afghanistan and among competing communities, women empowerment and trust gaps have been called into question. Vulnerabilities have also been brought up to the forefront. The chapters examine the media and action of identity in Afghanistan by drawing cues from the media and the notion that current identity is conveyed to people by many active and local activists of what some scholars call local and global identities.

Students and scholars interested in war, aspects of peacebuilding and peacemaking, crisis and post-war diplomacy, and community engagement and resilience will find this book useful. The reader will gain a deeper understanding of the complicated geopolitics behind the Taliban's return to Afghanistan, as well as changes in the Taliban's functioning and its encounter with the quest for legitimacy of power and authority, governance, and statecraft. The book provides a critical framework to analyse the evolving Taliban in Afghanistan and its potential impact on the war-torn country's political and security landscape.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Articles submitted for consideration of publication in REFUGEE WATCH should be around 5,500-7,500 words. Book reviews can be around 1000 words and review articles can be around 2000 words. Articles will have endnotes and not footnotes. Endnotes should be restricted to the minimum. Please refer to www.mcrg.ac.in for a details style sheet. Roundtables can also be proposed for publication. Enquiries about possible submissions are welcome.

For submission of articles and all other matters, correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, Refugee Watch, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, IA-48, Ground Floor, Sector-III, Salt Lake, Kolkata – 700 097 or editor@mcrg.ac.in. For book review and review-articles correspondence to be addressed to Samata Biswas, Book Review Editor, Refugee Watch, at the same address or at bsamata@gmail.com.

Authors will have to submit articles both hard and soft copies (in MS Word). All articles are peer reviewed and it may take 3 to 4 months before a decision is reached on the proposed publication. Contributors will get 2 copies of the journal.

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*See also “**Refugee Watch Online**”(<http://refugeewatchonline.blogspot.com>) for brief news, reports, views and comments on issues of forced displacement.*

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